

*Common Policy for Pastoral Marriage
Preparation* (Revised 08/92)
(Office of Marriage and Family Life)

Note: Being updated



THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN FRANCISCO

OFFICE OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

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Date: 11/8/01

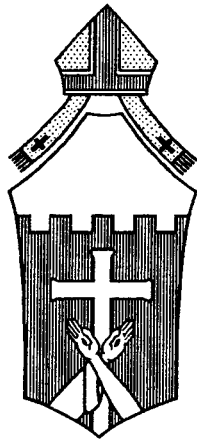
Re: Pastoral Marriage Preparation Policy

Here is the current Archdiocesan Common Policy for Pastoral Marriage Preparation last revised in 1992. We are in the process of updating this policy, and I will be able to offer a suggested draft to Archbishop Levada by the end of the month.

Any questions just call. This policy is available online at:
<http://www.catholicfamilylife2000.com/prep/preparationpolicy.html>

Chris

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Common Policy
for
Pastoral Marriage Preparation



Archdiocese of San Francisco

Revised August, 1992

COMMON POLICY FOR PASTORAL MARRIAGE PREPARATION

INTRODUCTION

This Common Policy for Pastoral Marriage Preparation is intended to assist the Church as a caring community in her ministry to engaged couples. With this policy the Church says to each couple, "We, the community to which you belong, care about you and your future success in marriage: We want to help you in the growth of your relationship to each other and to God. Our goal is to help you prepare not just for your wedding day but for your married life together."

This policy is a sign of the Church's concern for the future of marriage and the family. Current divorce statistics are but one indication that many couples fail to realize their hopes for a stable and happy marriage in our world today.

Also this policy establishes a support system for the parish priest and those working with him in the important ministry of marriage preparation. It establishes definite Archdiocesan norms and guidelines. These will help eliminate the confusion that can result from a wide disparity of preparation among parishes. The policy will enable us to be more pastorally effective in this ministry.

This policy can be implemented most effectively in parishes where trained married couples work in close cooperation with the parish priest to prepare engaged couples for marriage. Whenever the term priest or parish priest is used, it is to be applied also to deacons.

This policy is not intended to make it difficult for couples to marry in the Catholic Church. Rather it recognizes the seriousness of marriage and the responsibility of a caring Church to help couples prepare adequately for a life together.

Required Preparatory Period of Six Months

Couples are encouraged to contact their parish priest and begin formal marriage preparation as soon as they make a decision to marry. As a minimum requirement couples must contact the parish priest and begin their preparation at least 6 months before the proposed wedding date.

This is not intended as a "waiting period" but rather one of preparation. Therefore the process of such preparation should begin at the first meeting with the parish priest. Concern with the immediate preparation for the wedding itself can make it difficult for the couple to benefit fully from the preparation itself. Thus it is highly desirable for the couple to complete all the steps of preparation at least two months before the wedding date.

The purpose of this requirement is to insure adequate time for a couple to participate in and benefit from the steps of the marriage preparation process. In the event that the preparation reveals problems or obstacles to the marriage, this requirement affords a couple more time to resolve their difficulties through such steps as counseling, canonical procedures, etc.

In certain cases circumstances can arise that make the six-month requirement very difficult to observe. Exceptions to this time requirement should be made only for grave pastoral reasons and the couple should still be obliged to take part in all the steps of the marriage preparation process. The inability or unwillingness of the couple to understand the need for an adequate preparation for marriage does not constitute a grave reason.

The Parish Priest.

In accord with canon law, the Archdiocesan Policy asks that the parish of either the bride or groom, if both are Catholics, be the proper place for a wedding. (If one party is non-Catholic, then the proper place would be the parish of the Catholic party). Exceptions should be granted only for serious pastoral reasons.

The parish where the wedding takes place will be responsible for taking care of the marriage preparation process which includes:

1. Preliminary sessions with the priest/deacon/or marriage minister;
2. Assessment of their readiness for marriage and their levels of faith;
3. Participation in the parish marriage preparation program or Engaged Encounter;
4. Completion of the necessary documents. If a parish other than that of the bride or groom makes their church available for the wedding, they thereby accept responsibility for the entire marriage preparation.

The Cathedral of St. Mary's is considered an exception to this policy.

The parish priest who will witness the marriage has the responsibility to make a twofold assessment of:

The couple's readiness for marriage,

The level of faith of the Catholic parties.

A tentative date for the wedding should not be set until the priest has had the opportunity to make this assessment by meeting personally with the couples. Please refer to: Faithful to Each Other Forever Published 1989 by USCC - Msgr. Joseph Champlin. Pub.# 252-7 Tel. #1-800-235-8722.

Preparation Process.

The couple's proximate preparation for marriage will include four complementary components:

1. At least one initial session with the parish priest.
2. Premarriage inventory, eg., Foccus or PMI.
(cf. Appendix D)
3. Participation in one of the available Marriage Preparation Programs.
4. Follow-up sessions with the parish priest.

Initial Session(s) with the priest provides the opportunity to:

Explain the Policy as an effort by a caring Church to help the couple prepare adequately for marriage. Dispel the notion of these requirements as "more red tape" before they can be married in the Church.

Discuss with the couple the importance of their own assessment of their strengths and weaknesses as they affect their relationship.

Use of a premarital inventory can be very helpful in getting to areas that need discussion. It should be administered in this session and the results discussed with the couple at another session before the couple participate in a marriage preparation program. (cf. Appendix D for information concerning the Premarital Inventory)

Fill out the premarital forms. This is an occasion to discuss the couple's attitude to marriage and also their present relationship to God, Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church. (The above steps will assist the priest in determining whether there are any serious obstacles to the wedding of a couple in the Catholic Church).

If a canonical impediment e.g. a previous marriage, is present, the parish priest should begin his investigation of the matter at the first meeting with the couple. If the case is sent to the Marriage Tribunal, he should inform the Tribunal of the proposed date for the wedding, so that they can expedite the case as quickly as possible.

Explain the marriage preparation programs. Help them choose the program they desire among the options. They should normally participate in this program before their next meeting with the priest.

Arrange a tentative date for the wedding, providing the assessment has not revealed any special obstacles and the couple has agreed to participate in one of the Marriage Preparation Programs. Explain that this date can be definitely confirmed only after they participate in a Marriage Preparation Program.

Marriage Preparation Programs

These programs are important aids - but not substitutes for the personal sessions with the parish priest. Participation in one of the programs below is required for every couple preparing for marriage.

The Parish Program and the Engaged Encounter are the most highly recommended forms of Marriage Preparation. It is the responsibility of each parish to determine the program or programs best suited to their own parishes.

Parish Marriage Preparation Program. Engaged couples meet in the homes of married couples in the parish. Family Life Ministries trains couples to conduct these four week sessions.

Engaged Encounter. A weekend experience focused on a couple's communication on vital topics. A team of two married couples and a priest conduct the weekend.

Second Marriage Preparation Program. Where one or both parties are entering a second marriage, especially with children, a unique preparation program is available through Family Life Ministries.

Marriage Preparation with ONLY the Parish Priest. A proper preparation program would be conducted by a married couple. It includes the following subjects: The sacrament of matrimony, communication, conflict resolution, sexuality and faith. Either Engaged Encounter Weekend or the Parish Marriage Preparation Program would fulfill this policy. Only in cases of extreme necessity, is the priest, deacon or pastoral minister to do the entire preparation alone. He would use up-to-date preparation manuals and handbooks and spend the necessary time to cover the required topics. It is important to note that the policy in allowing this type of preparation in these exceptional cases calls for devoting at least 6 hours to these sessions. Thus these would be in addition to the 2-3 sessions normally conducted for the initial interview, assessment, documents, etc.

Final Sessions with the priest provide an opportunity to:

Discuss with the couple their feelings and reactions to the marriage preparation program they attended.

Discuss any sensitive areas in their relationship that have surfaced thus far.

Discuss the meaning of marriage in the Church and its religious/sacramental dimensions. Explore the role they expect the Church to play in their married life.

Complete the necessary canonical papers.

Finalize the wedding date

Assist the couple in planning their wedding liturgy.

N.B. Couples seeking a validation or wishing to enter a second marriage should follow this preparation process also. At times, circumstances may call for special sensitivity to their needs.

Reasons for Delay of the Marriage.

The Church holds that the right to marry is an important natural right. It is however, a restricted right. Both Church and State have determined legitimate restrictions. There can be serious reasons for delaying a marriage.

There is no single, objective standard by which one can judge a couple's readiness to marry. However, special reasons may indicate a need for further assessment and growth and justify a delay in the marriage ceremony. Among the reasons that may in certain circumstances warrant a delay are:

Refusal of the couple to participate in the process of preparation for marriage.

This may also include an unwillingness to take part in further evaluation and counseling that special circumstances, e.g. under-age, pregnancy, etc., may warrant.

Lack of faith. Reception of the Sacrament of Marriage presumes faith. The priest has the responsibility to determine that the couple has the basic Catholic faith required for participation in the Sacraments of the Church. Many couples are at a developmental stage in their religious life and there is often a gap between their faith and their practice of it. (cf. Appendix A as a guideline for the implementation of this Policy).

Inability of the couple to contract a valid marriage e.g., denial of the permanence of marriage.

Lack of readiness for marriage resulting from circumstances such as serious lack of maturity, social pressure, home conditions, pregnancy in certain circumstances, undue haste in entering into marriage, etc.

Substance Abuse-Where serious concerns with drug and alcohol use are surfaced during the preparation period, the priest/deacon should recommend counseling at Catholic Charities or other programs.

Teenagers under 19. Such couples must receive individual evaluative counseling before the marriage can be arranged in accord with the policy of the Archdiocese.

Separation of the couples for an extended period before/ after the wedding. There may be insufficient opportunity for the couple to develop a mature relationship.

Fulfillment of the requirements of Church law. It may be necessary to delay the wedding until certain requirements are satisfied.

Assessment of Readiness for Marriage.

Responsibility for Assessment.

Couples may enter marriage with major problems that lead to probable marital failure. Some of these are such that they may even render the marriage invalid from the start, as evidenced by some applications to the Marriage Tribunal for annulments. This policy asks the priest to be sensitive to the possible existence of such **major problem areas**. These may consist of many elements, e.g., real difficulties in their relationship, lack of any openness to faith, serious lack of maturity, canonical impediments, etc.

The initial presumption is that each engaged couple will be able to proceed with the arrangements for their marriage. The question of delay or denial of a Church ceremony arises only when the assessment process surfaces **major difficulties**.

Role of the Priest.

It is important to recognize the fact that the priest in this assessment is not called on to be a psychologist or a judge. He is asked only to do what his pastoral training and experience as a priest qualify him to do - namely to make a prudent, pastoral judgment whether certain conditions exist.

Process of Judgment.

When the priest discovers the possible presence of a major obstacle to a marriage, he can follow a definite procedure that will assist him in making a decision. It consists of these steps:

Consultation: The priest should seek advice from another competent person, e.g., priest, deacon, married couple, counselor, social worker, etc.

Evaluation/Assessment: Some form of testing may prove helpful. Also the couple can be referred to a professional counselor for evaluation/assessment. The couple should be informed that this counselor/evaluator will then discuss with the priest the possible obstacles to marriage.

Decision: The priest with the help of the above consultation makes a definite decision.

Appeal: If the wedding is delayed or denied, the couple should be advised of their right to appeal this decision to the Chancery Office.

Process for Delay.

If any of the above factors are present or if some reasonable question is raised concerning a couple's readiness to marry, **further consultation and evaluation may be required before a wedding date can be set.** This may be a time of growth for the couple in their relationship.

If possible, the priest should make every effort to help the couple overcome the specific circumstances that made the delay advisable. Any such necessary delay will be disappointing for a couple. Sensitivity and understanding on the part of the parish priest are vital.

In such a remedial approach the following are among the options available:

Counseling by the priest. Lack of faith would be one instance where this approach would be of value.

Referral to a Marriage Counselor e.g., Catholic Charities.
Referral should be made only of those couples who want help in resolving their difficulties.

Referral to an education program e.g., premarriage or adult education programs.

Time. The passage of time may be all that is required in certain circumstances e.g., the marriage of minors, extended separation of couples or immaturity.

The priest should meet periodically with the couples to evaluate their progress. This will enable him to judge when the problem is sufficiently resolved and then set a date for the wedding.

If a couple, who has been advised of a necessary delay by the priest arranging for their marriage, should approach another priest, **he may not proceed** without contacting the priest who counseled delay or the Chancery Office.

Interfaith Marriages.

When the parties are of different faith backgrounds at least one additional session with the priest should be added to discuss the religious dimension of the marriage and the possible problems that can arise. Some key issues are:

Membership in two different church communities.

Religious formation of the children.

Feelings of family members.

Non-practicing Catholics.

When one party was baptized in the Catholic faith, received very little instruction and is non-practicing, the same procedure as for interfaith marriage instruction is required. If someone has been raised in the Church but has abandoned the practice of their Catholic religion, the same procedure should be followed.

This circumstance provides the priest with a valuable opportunity to discuss with the couple the place of God, Jesus Christ and the Church in their lives. For some it is the occasion to clear up misunderstandings about religion, get in touch with the level of their own faith-life and that of their partner and at times to be reconciled with the Church community.

Summary of Common Policy.

1. The couples will contact the parish priest at least six months before the anticipated date of the wedding.

2. The preparation process should begin at the first meeting with the parish priest. It is highly desirable to complete this process at least two months before the wedding date.

3. Their proximate preparation for marriage will include four complementary components:
 - At least one initial session with the parish priest.
 - Completion of Pre Marriage Inventory: Foccus or PMI.
 - Participation in one of the marriage preparation programs available to them.
 - Follow-up sessions with the priest.

4. The parish priest has the responsibility to make a twofold assessment of:
 - The couple's readiness for marriage.
 - The level of faith of the Catholic parties.

5. The date for the wedding should not be set until the priest has had the opportunity to make this assessment by meeting personally with the couple. That date is contingent upon their willingness to participate in a marriage preparation program.

6. After the initial assessment, if no problems have arisen, a tentative date can be set. That date should be definitely confirmed only after the couple participates in a Marriage Preparation Program. This should be clearly explained to the couple.

7. If a couple, who has been advised of a necessary delay by the priest arranging for their marriage, should approach another priest, he may not proceed without contacting the priest who counseled delay or the Chancery Office.

APPENDIX A

Faith and the Engaged Couple

The priest has the responsibility to determine that the couple has the basic Christian faith required for participation in the sacraments. That same minimal faith is required in a mixed marriage on the part of a Catholic party.

This assessment can be at times a difficult and sensitive pastoral challenge for the priest. If he is overly rigid he may alienate the couple from the Church. If he requires little or no faith at all, he fails to represent the interests of the Church and performs a very "questionable sacramental" ceremony.

The following notes are intended to help the priest in developing a process of judgment by which he can do justice both to the couple and to his responsibility as a minister of the Church community.

Faithful to Each Other Forever, Published USCC - Msgr. Joseph Champlin.
Pub. # 252-7 Tel. # 1-800-235-8722.

Questions: Faith, Sacrament & Law, Walter Cuenin. Address to the Canon Law Society, October 1978. Published in ORIGINS, November 9, 1978, Vol. 8, No. 21, pp. 321-328.

Statement of the Problem.

The Code of Canon Law, #1055, 1 & 2, states that there can be no marriage of the baptized that is not a sacrament.

In recent years this position has been questioned.

The episcopal conferences of France, Belgium and Italy.

The International Theological Commission in Rome in 1977 and 1978 pointed out the need of living faith in addition to Baptism.

This emphasis on the necessity of faith in sacramental activity has been reaffirmed strongly in the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

This conciliar principle has found concrete application in the new rituals of the sacraments published after the council. In the new Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, for example, the role and importance of faith is clearly stressed. Some would maintain that this is a model or constitution of all sacramental worship. What is spoken of here represents a minimal level of awareness and faith that is called for in all sacramental celebrations. In the preamble to the Rite of Baptism for Children this necessity of faith is also clearly articulated. In very specific terms pastors are reminded that baptism may be postponed when there is no evidence of faith on the part of the sponsors of the child or no real possibility for Christian upbringing. In other words, the Church has made a dramatic shift. In former times we were encouraged to baptize almost anyone. Today, we may actually postpone the baptism if there seems to be no reasonable promise of a life of faith. This reflects pastorally what the theology of the Church has articulated in the documents of Vatican II.

General Principles for a Solution.

Statement of the Necessity of Faith.

We need to state explicitly the necessity of a lived faith in the preamble to the ritual of marriage and in any revision of Church law that might be forthcoming. We need to make explicit in ritual directives and law that a living faith is a basic sine qua non for Christian marriage.

In the issue under discussion, much of the attitudinal change has occurred. The International Theological Commission has spoken of the need for a living faith in order to have a sacramental marriage, and the practice of the Church in the Sacrament of Baptism is clear. The time is ripe for us to state clearly and officially that sacramental marriage is only possible for the baptized who share a living faith.

At present, there is a sense of "ceremonialism" and "automaticism" in Church law. The ceremony of Baptism automatically achieves its effect and the baptized automatically receive the Sacrament of Marriage. This same principle is still incorporated in the proposed schema for a new Code of Canon Law. This is no longer acceptable. The necessity of the faith dimension must be reflected in the canonical discipline of the Church.

Today, not a few apparently Christian marriages are, in fact, the union of baptized "unbelievers" and should not be treated as covenants in the Lord. We need a clear statement of the necessity of faith for sacramental marriage.

Recognition of Secular Marriage.

Such recognition might solve some of our present pastoral problems.

The Need for Pastoral Sensitivity.

One thing that emerges in this discussion is the complexity of the problem. The baptized persons who approach the Church for marriage represent all levels of faith experience. There is no simple dividing line between those of faith and those of no faith. It would be a serious mistake to equate non-practice with non-belief. Therefore, great pastoral sensitivity is needed.

We must seek ways of discerning the faith of the young couples seeking marriage.

In a desire for faith-filled sacramental marriages we must not drive people from the community of excessive rigidity. Yet, true pastoral sensitivity demands some standards of faith. Otherwise, it becomes only pastoral sentimentality.

Practical Directions.

It is one thing to state officially that a living faith is necessary for sacramental marriage. This is important and is clearly based on contemporary theology. And since law must give expression to theology for the service of the community, this is a necessary formulation of Church law.

However, how do we translate this general principle into a viable pastoral plan? Concretely, how do we determine who has sufficient faith to celebrate a sacramental marriage?

As a general preamble, it is important to remember that no one can judge the faith of another. Only God knows our hearts. Therefore, the role of the pastor and pastoral team in marriage preparation is not one of judging internal dispositions.

However, the Church can and does have the right to set norms for sacramental worship. The Church, and in a particular way, the local ecclesial body, must spell out what is required of those who seek sacraments. As the International Theological Commission states, "It belongs then to the Church to examine the dispositions of the future couple to see if they really correspond to the baptism that they have received."

Therefore, when a request for marriage is made, the Church must make sure that it is truly a request for a sacrament. Many times it is simply a request for a religious service, a blessing or some ecclesial ritual to surround this important event. At other times the request is made because the Church seems to be the only place in Western society to solemnize significant life experiences. Sometimes it is made for purely sentimental reasons. **The task of the Church is to discern in this request a faith motivation which would make a sacramental marriage possible.**

Welcome.

We have a special **opportunity for evangelization** when a young couple approaches us with the request for marriage. We should genuinely welcome their request. This, of course, is not identical with setting a date for the marriage.

Of course, the question of admission or nonadmission to the sacrament is not raised initially. Rather, we start with the persons in their life situation. We help them express the reasons for their request. We help lead them to an expression of their faith. Thus, we help them discern their reasons for marriage in the Church.

Naturally, we do not start with the premise that the couple must prove their faith. Rather, we are looking to find ways to help them express what faith may actually be present.

In this dialogue, which may take place in so many ways and not exclusively with the priest, many couples will be helped to see the faith they have and why they want to express it in a sacrament. The difficulty arises with those couples who seem unable to discern any faith motive in their request for marriage in church.

Minimum Faith Required.

We know that there should be an awareness on the part of both persons that their union and marital love reflect and actualize the relationship of Christ and the Church. Without this, even if all canonical regulations are carefully followed, how can we mark their marriage as a Christian sacrament? Yet how do we concretely ascertain this basic faith awareness? I would suggest the following as criteria that may be helpful in this endeavor:

- willingness to participate in catechesis;
- willingness to share the faith with children;
- willingness to share in some worship;
- willingness to share moral values.

Is there a willingness on the part of this couple to participate in some form of catechesis? Will they agree to work with the priest or pastoral team in some form of premarriage preparation? If not, the solution is clear. There should be no sacrament without some catechesis. (Of course, we must not be rigid in insisting on only one type of catechetical program). If they agree, then there is good reason to assume that the couple is open to the faith and to participation in the Church. If not, one would doubt the seriousness of their faith motivation.

Is there a willingness to share the faith with any children of the marriage? Will the couple agree to educate any children in the faith and to try to share some religious training with them? If not, one would wonder what sense a marriage in church would have for the couple.

Is there any willingness to participate in the worship of the community? If not, then it is difficult to understand how marriage in the church could be intelligible. (Here, again, rigidity must be avoided. Participation in worship varies with different cultures. However, if there is no openness to worship, then a question would have to be raised).

Is there some basic agreement on the part of the couple with Christian values? For example, do they share any common ground with us and our desires for social justice, peace, racial equality, support of human life? These may be areas in which the young couple can discern some relationship to the Church. If there is no real relationship here, then again, a sacramental celebration would seem to be without meaning.

These criteria are not the only ones possible. However, they do offer the pastoral minister a viable way of implementing an official policy that would require some faith awareness for sacramental marriage.

By following this suggested pastoral approach, any refusal of a sacrament would not be seen as an arbitrary or rigid judgment. It would be rather the result of a process of discernment in which the young couple would be led to realize the lack of integrity in their being married in church. Hopefully, by taking this faith dimension more seriously and by working at this process of discernment, we can make the moment of marriage a real moment of evangelization.

APPENDIX B

Preparation Sessions with the Parish Priest

The meetings of the engaged couple and the parish priest are of primary importance in the process of marriage preparation. They enable the priest to assess the couple's readiness for marriage and the level of their faith and if necessary, to be of help to them in these areas. They also provide an opportunity for the priest to develop with them a more personal relationship that will be a sign of the Church's care and concern.

These sessions provide the priest with the opportunity to gain some knowledge of the couple's relationship. Hopefully, as the priest goes through the steps outlined in the preparation process, the strengths and weaknesses of the relationship will surface naturally. Among the items that are of particular importance in this regard are:

- Length of their courtship.
- Relationship with their families.
- Financial situation.
- Educational background.
- Relationship to the Catholic Church.
- Areas of major disagreement.
- Special circumstances such as:

Prior Marriage

Age Difference

Pregnancy

Emotional Problems

Parental Opposition

Faith Problem

Different Cultural Backgrounds

Health Problems/Drug & alcohol abuse

Long Separation

Military Service

Summary of the Steps of Preparation Process for the Priest

These steps summarize the present pastoral practice of most priests:

Initial Sessions (c.f., Section 1640 for a fuller explanation)

- Explanation of the reasons for the Policy.
- Discussion of the couple's relationship.
- Use of the Premarital Inventory.
- Premarital forms.
- Possible canonical impediments.
- Explanation of available marriage preparation programs.
- Tentative wedding date.

Followup Sessions

- **Discussion of the couple's reaction to the marriage preparation program they attended.**
- **Discussion of any concerns of sensitive areas that have surfaced thus far.**
- **Discussion of the meaning of marriage in the Church and its religious/sacramental dimension. How do they view the role of the Church in their future life together?**
- **Completion of the necessary canonical forms.**
- **Finalization of the wedding date.**
- **Assistance in planning their wedding liturgy.**

APPENDIX C

Consultation Process with Catholic Charities.

The Common Policy in the section entitled Assessment of Readiness for Marriage V, C. states: "When the priest discovers the possible presence of a major obstacle to a marriage, he can follow a definite procedure that will assist him in making a decision."

The second step of the recommended procedure, Evaluation/ Assessment, suggests a referral to a professional counselor.

The Family Life Ministries Staff and the Directors of Catholic Charities/Catholic Social Service have developed a procedure to be followed when the parish priest chooses to refer a couple to a Catholic Charities for Evaluation/ Assessment.

The priest will discuss with the couple whatever major obstacle to the marriage has surfaced. He will explain his responsibility to make a decision that is in their best interests.

The priest will explain that there are special counselors at Catholic Charities who are available to work with the priest and the couple in instances where the couple has a particular problem that raises some question concerning their readiness for marriage.

He will then ask the couple if they are willing to see the counselor. It should be clearly explained that these sessions are not primarily for personal counseling but rather for evaluation and assessment of their readiness for marriage at this time. These sessions should help the couple gain more insight into their own relationship and be of assistance to the priest in assessing their readiness for marriage.

If they are willing to take that step, he will request their consent:

- **To talk over the major obstacles beforehand with the counselor.**
- **To receive a report from the counselor on their sessions.**

Catholic Charities will appoint counselors in each county whose special assignment will be to take care of these interviews. A list of those counselors will be provided the clergy in that area.

The counselor will be prepared to see each couple referred for three sessions. In some instances not all three sessions will be required.

The actual cost to Catholic Charities for each client couple referred for three sessions is now one hundred dollars. However, in this instance, the Catholic Charities will subsidize the program for the first sixty dollars of the total cost. For each couple then, the total charge will be forty dollars. While it is recommended that the parish pay one-half of the cost and the couple the other, that decision will be left to the discretion of each parish that chooses to utilize this service.

N.B. The above procedure can be utilized in instances when circumstances such as serious lack of maturity, use of alcohol or drugs causing problems, social pressure, major disagreements, etc., are present. It would not be used where the major difficulty concerns a religious question such as lack of faith or certain canonical requirements.

If couples are willing to consult with Catholic Charities, the priest will ask them to sign the form that specifically grants both the priest and the CC staff person full permission to discuss the couples' case with each other.

The priest will then send his summary of the case and a copy of the written permission signed by them to the appropriate CC staff person. He may also wish to discuss the case personally or by phone with this person.

The couple will be given the name, address and phone of the appropriate CC staff person and directed to call and make an appointment.

CC staff persons have been instructed not to make an appointment with the engaged couple until they have received the evaluation form and signed permission from the parish priest.

N.B. The responsibility for the decision either to marry a couple or to delay the wedding rests with the priest. The CC staff person will not make such a decision but will provide valuable consultation to assist the priest in making his decision.

The cost of the sessions should be clearly explained by the priest before their decision to go to CC is finally made.

No CC staff person may proceed with the assessment/ evaluation sessions until all the required steps of the process have been completed by the priest.

FORMS: Forms to be used for the couple, priest and counselor involved in the Consultation Process are available from the Marriage Tribunal, The Family Life Ministries Office and Catholic Charities.

APPENDIX D

INSTRUMENTS TO FACILITATE DIALOGUE

The 1990 Marriage Policy Revision agreed to by the Priest's Council and the Archbishop requires that an engaged couple "complete as an element of preparation either the FOCCUS or PMI inventory...."

The handbook of pastoral help for marriage preparation, "Faithful to Each Other Forever" published by USCC 1988 cites our reasons for using a pre-marriage instrument such as FOCCUS or PMI.

1. To give an engaged couple concrete means to look at their particular relationship in light of factors and issues that are usually involved in all marriages.
2. To allow clergy, married lead couples and counselors who work with the engaged to tailor their facilitation or teaching appropriately.
3. To increase the engaged couples felt need and appreciation of subsequent preparation by raising the consciouness of the potential bride and groom about their unique needs, problems and issues.
4. To give straightforward education and/or evaluation by providing the couple with both a broad and specific checklist of the issues/concerns/topics that impact marriage.

FOCCUS - (Facilitating Open Couple Communion Understanding and Study)

Developed by Archdiocese of Omaha; has 156 questions also a section on second marriage and interfaith marriages. The questions are available in Spanish. This can be computer scored by the Family Life Ministries office for \$2.50 per couple (billed twice a year). The license has been purchased from the Archdiocese of Omaha. FOCCUS also can be handscored or put into a parish computer with proper license form the Archdiocese of Omaha and the purchase of a diskette from Parish Data Systems, 3140 North 51st Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85031.

PMI - (Pre-Marriage Inventory)

This was developed by Bess Association in 1975 and revised by PMI Profile from Intercommunications Publishing Inc., in 1984. It has 10 catagories and 146 questions. Scoring at \$5.00 per couple is provided through the company. PMI Profile, 1 Valentine Lane, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514. Handscoring is no longer available.

CAUTIONS ABOUT MARRIAGE PREPRATION INSTRUMENTS

It is very important that the pre-marriage preparation instrument is not administered as a test - a pass/fail. All the authors stress that the instrument is about how the couple agree or disagree at the time the instrument is administered. It is not to be used as a single measure of whether or not a couple maybe married in the church. It is not intended to predict the future of the marriage.

These instruments are to facilitate communication. The lead couples in marriage preparation and Engaged Encounter tell us that couples who have worked the instument before preparation programs are more open to work on their relationship and don't feel they "know all about each other".

More information and packets can be found at the Family Life Ministries Office - 565-3622.

APPENDIX E

MARRIAGE FOR THOSE UNDER NINETEEN

INTRODUCTION

In October 1973 the Archdiocese put into effect a Pre-Marriage Counseling Program that made mandatory a procedure of evaluation in two instances: 1) When either party will not have reached his or her nineteenth birthday by the date prepared for the wedding, 2) When in the pastoral judgment of the priest, one or both of the parties is not ready to handle the rights and responsibilities of Christian marriage.

UNDER NINETEEN

The Archdiocesan Common Policy for Pastoral Marriage Preparation which became effective on January 1, 1981, reaffirms the requirement in existence since 1973 that individuals under nineteen must receive individual evaluative counseling.

OTHER CASES

The policy emphasizes the responsibility of the priest to determine the readiness of the couples for marriage. If a reasonable doubt arises, the priest is asked to recommend strongly to the couples that they consult with a counselor for another evaluation and assessment of their readiness for marriage. This represents a change from the 1973 Program that made such a referral to a counselor mandatory.

PROCEDURE

The Assessment of Readiness for Marriage and the Process for Delay are outlined in Series 1660 and 1670 of the Policy. The Consultation Process, described in Appendix C, Series 1694 and 1695, is to be followed for those under nineteen with the added requirement that consultation with a counselor is mandatory in their case.

SPECIAL STEPS

The following steps outlined in the 1973 Program are of particular importance for the under nineteen:

The couple should be referred by the priest to the County Office of Catholic Charities or to a Counselor or other Counseling Service approved by the Ordinary.

It is important that the priest himself see to it that the parents of those referred are aware of the referral of their children to the counselor.

If one of the parties is in military service and unavailable for counseling by CC or the parish priest, the available party is to be referred to CC. The priest is asked to write to the military Chaplain and ask that he interview the serviceman along the lines of the Archdiocesan form. The Chaplain's report should be returned to the parish priest and attached to his own report when the case is being sent to the Chancery. A similar procedure is to be followed for students of distant colleges and out of state residents.

When the counselor deems it advisable, he will seek to interview the parents as well.

Upon receipt of the report from the counselor, the priest will then schedule his own interviews with the couple and also with their parents so that he can intelligently complete the Archdiocesan form before forwarding it to the Ordinary.

This Archdiocesan form, containing the evaluation by the counselor and the remarks of the priest, is to be sent to the Chancery. It will be promptly reviewed and an answer given to the priest in which permission to proceed with the marriage or a mandatory postponement of the Church marriage will be given.

FORMS FOR COUNSELING REFERRAL

The same forms will be used for all counseling referrals, for both the under nineteen and all other problem cases.

Forms are available on request from the Family Life Ministries Office, the Archdiocese Tribunal, or your local C.S.S. Office.

DESCRIPTION OF FORMS

- | | |
|--------|--|
| Form W | Request for Chancery Permission to Marry. |
| Form X | Consent of Couple to Exchange Information. |
| Form Y | Pre-Marital Evaluation by the Priest. |
| Form Z | Pre-Marital Evaluation by the Counselor. |

FORM W

**PRE-MARITAL EVALUATION PROGRAM
ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN FRANCISCO**

**Request for Chancery Permission
(only for those under nineteen)**

PARISH _____

PRIEST _____

CITY _____

PROPOSED MARRIAGE DATE _____

GROOM

BRIDE

FULL NAME _____

FULL NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____ **BIRTH DATE** _____

PHONE _____ **BIRTH DATE** _____

RELIGION _____

RELIGION _____

The section below is to be completed by the Priest only after the couple have had their counseling sessions and the form has been returned by the Counselor.

How much time have you spent with this couple?

How well do you know the prospective bride?

Groom?

How well do you know their family backgrounds?

Do you agree with the evaluation given by the counselor? If not, why not? (Be specific and detailed.)

I recommend that this marriage be permitted _____ postponed _____.

Date _____

Priest's Signature

FOR CHANCERY USE:

Marriage permitted _____

Marriage postponed _____

Date _____

By _____

FORM X

PRE-MARITAL EVALUATION PROGRAM

Archdiocese of San Francisco

CONSENT TO EXCHANGE INFORMATION FORM

(Couple)

We, the undersigned, grant permission _____
Priest's Name

and _____ to exchange information regarding discussions we
(Agency or Counselor)

have had with them about ourselves and our readiness for marriage. This consent is granted for a period of

six months, unless withdrawn prior to that time.

Date

Signature

Priest Witness

Signature

PRE-MARITAL EVALUATION FORM

(Priest)

PARISH _____ PRIEST _____ PHONE _____

Groom

Bride

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____ DOB _____

PHONE _____ DOB _____

OCCUPATION _____

Specific reason for the referral: _____

Date _____

Priest's Signature _____

This form is to be mailed to the counselor to whom the couple is referred. The counselor will not make an appointment to see the couple until this form has been received.

FORM Z

PRE-MARITAL EVALUATION FORM

(Counselor)

CATHOLIC CHARITIES _____ COUNSELOR _____ PHONE _____

NAME OF COUPLE _____

1. Number of sessions _____.
2. Was the problem which prompted the referral evident in the counseling sessions?

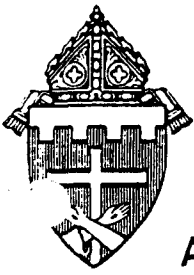
3. Were other problems evident which might inhibit a successful marriage? If yes, please describe briefly!

4. What are the counselor's recommendations, if any, for actions to be taken before a definite marriage date is set?

(Date)

Counselor's Signature

This form is to be mailed to the priest who referred the couple to the counselor.



Archdiocese of San Francisco
 CHANCERY OFFICE
 445 CHURCH STREET
 SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94114

APPLICATION FOR MATRIMONIAL DISPENSATION/PERMISSION

Priest/ _____ Church: _____ City: _____
 Deacon/ _____
 Pastoral Minister _____

BRIDE

GROOM

	NAME	
_____	_____	_____
_____	ADDRESS	_____
_____	CITY/STATE/ZIP	_____
_____	RELIGION	_____
_____	DATE OF BAPTISM	_____
_____	CHURCH OF BAPTISM	_____
_____	CITY/STATE	_____

DISPENSATION REQUESTED

- A) Disparity of Worship (never baptized): _____
 B) Disparity of Worship ad cautelam (possibly baptized but not proven): _____
 C) Age: _____ F) Abduction: _____ H) Consanguinity: _____
 D) Affinity: _____ G) Public Propriety: _____ I) Civil Adoption: _____
 E) Crime: _____

The reasons for this request are: _____

DISPENSATION FROM FORM

Dispensation from canonical form is requested so that the proposed marriage may be validly contracted:

on (date): _____ by (officiating witness and denomination): _____

at (place): _____

The reasons for this request are _____

I have no reason to doubt that these reasons exist. I shall arrange to be informed of the celebration of this marriage, see to its proper recording in the matrimonial register of the Catholic party's parish and inform the Chancery Office of the Diocese granting the dispensation and the Church of Baptism of the Catholic Party.

 Signature of Priest/Deacon/Pastoral Minister

(OVER)

PERMISSION REQUESTED

- A) Mixed Religion (bride/groom is a baptized non-Catholic or baptized Catholic who, by formal act, has left the Church): _____
- B) The marriage cannot be recognized or celebrated according to civil law: _____
- C) One or both parties is bound by an ecclesiastical censure: _____
- D) One or both parties is a minor (under 18) whose parents are unaware of or oppose the marriage: _____
- E) One or both parties desires to marry by proxy: _____
- F) Parties have no fixed residence (vagi): _____

The reasons for this request are: _____

DECLARATION AND PROMISE

(To be signed by the Catholic party who intends marriage with a baptized non-Catholic, an unbaptized person, a Catholic who has notoriously rejected the Faith, or a baptized Catholic who by formal act has left the Church)

I reaffirm my faith in Jesus Christ and, with God's help, intend to continue living that faith in the Catholic Church. I promise to do all in my power to share the faith I have received with our children by having them baptized and reared as Catholics.

Signature of the Catholic Party

I hereby attest that the Catholic Party to this application has explicitly made the above promise before me and that the non-Catholic Party to this application has been informed of this promise and understands the obligation it imposes upon the Catholic Party.

Signature of Priest/Deacon/Pastoral Minister

(FOR CHANCERY USE ONLY)

Dispensation or Permission Granted: _____

Granted by: _____ Date: _____

(Seal of Chancery)

(The signed and sealed rescript is to be preserved in the prenuptial file)