

## Getting Married in the Diocese of Evansville

*Congratulations on your engagement! Your next step will be to prepare not only for your wedding day but especially for your marriage in the Catholic Church.*

Preparation and instruction are essential to being married in the Catholic Church. This guide will help you plan for your marriage in the Diocese of Evansville.

**STEP 1: Contact a Priest, or Deacon** regarding the marriage preparation process in your parish after you are formally engaged and at least 6 months before your anticipated marriage. With your priest's or deacon's guidance, move to the appropriate STEPS 2-4.

**STEP 2: Pre-Marriage Inventory. Diagnostic tools for assessment such as FOCCUS** are provided by your priest or deacon and designed to help you learn more about yourself, your fiancé, and your relationship. Topics include family background, faith, finances, communication, problem solving, intimacy, and sexuality. It is important that you and your fiancé answer these questions honestly so that you both develop a better understanding of these important areas in your future marriage together.

Over the course of several meetings, you will discuss the results with each other and a trained facilitator, usually your priest or deacon.

**STEP 3: Marriage Preparation Program.** You and your fiancé will both attend an UNVEILED retreat through the Diocese **OR** go through a sponsor couple program at your parish (if available). This offers focused time for you and your fiancé to continue to examine your readiness for lifelong marriage together. The Diocese of Evansville offers 3 of these retreats per year at SARTO Retreat House. Some parishes have a Sponsor Couple ministry, where a married couple mentors an engaged couple for a period of several weeks, using either the *Joy Filled Marriage* or the *For Better For Ever* program.

**STEP 4: Natural Family Planning (NFP).** Attend a FREE, 45-minute session about Natural Family Planning. This course is called the Truth about NFP and is provided throughout the Diocese of Evansville with the assistance of the Holy Family Center for Life trained practitioners.

**NOTE:** The NFP introduction is a part of the UNVEILED retreat, so those attendees do not need to schedule a separate NFP class.

**2023 UNVEILED Retreat Dates:** There are 3 retreats per year. They are held at SARTO retreat house in Evansville.

- MARCH 17-18, 2023 (Two Day) \$225.00
- MAY 12-13, 2023 (Two Day) \$225.00
- SEPTEMBER 30, 2023 (One Day) \$170.00

**Don't Forget!** Be sure to obtain your marriage license at least one month, but no more than 60 days, before the ceremony. If the marriage is to occur in another state, those laws may vary. Take the license to your priest or deacon, and be certain he returns that after the wedding.

**NOTE:** The prenuptial investigation packet is provided by the Office of the Tribunal to priests and deacons.

If the preparation occurs in the Diocese of Evansville, but the wedding will be in a different diocese, additional time is necessary to obtain any permission or dispensations and to forward the prenuptial investigation packet to the proper diocese.

If this is a marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic, additional permission or dispensations are necessary and are handled by the Office of the Tribunal. If you or your proposed spouse has ever been previously married, proof of a declaration of nullity is required for marriage in the Church. This is a separate investigation to determine if one is free to be married in the Catholic Church and requires additional time.

[MARRIAGE PREPARATION PROGRAM / LINKS](#)  
[CURRENTLY USED IN THE DIOCESE OF EVANSVILLE](#)

**Diocese Marriage Preparation Webpage**

<https://www.evdio.org/marriage-preparation.html>

**Diocese Natural Family Planning Webpage**

<https://www.evdio.org/natural-family-planning.html>

**UNVEILED Retreat Online Registration**

<https://www.osvhub.com/evdio/forms/2023-unveiled-retreat-registration>

**Truth about NFP Registration**

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0e4bafad29a3f9c70-educational>

**More Info about UNVEILED**

<http://www.unveiledmarriage.com/home>

**Holy Family Center for Life FB page**

<https://www.facebook.com/HFCLfertilitycarecenter/>

**Sponsor Couple (Parish) Marriage Prep. Programs**

- Joy Filled Marriage  
<https://ascensionpress.com/collections/joy-filled-marriage>
- For Better Forever  
<https://marriagepreparation.com/>

**Marriage Preparation Inventory**

FOCCUS

<https://www.foccusinc.com/foccus-inventory.aspx>

**Marriage Documents**

Tribunal

<https://www.evdio.org/tribunal.html>

[ADDITIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION](#)

Office of Family & Life

Eric Girten, Director

(812) 424-5536

[egirten@evdio.org](mailto:egirten@evdio.org)

Office of the Tribunal

Mary Gen Blittschau, Director

(812) 424-5536

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Office of Worship

Matt Miller, Director

(812) 424-5536

[mmiller@evdio.org](mailto:mmiller@evdio.org)

Office of Hispanic Ministry

Bertha Melendres, Director

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## FAQs

**I am a Catholic who wants to get married in the Church but have not registered in a parish. What should I do?** If you have not already, you and your fiancé should find a Catholic parish you both like. After all, this will be your family's spiritual home! Call the parish office and ask how to register. You can then talk to the priest or deacon to start the marriage preparation process. The diocesan website has a list of all of its parishes and the contact information available at [http://evdiomessage-archive.org/messagepdf/directories/Yearbook\\_B\\_Parishes.pdf](http://evdiomessage-archive.org/messagepdf/directories/Yearbook_B_Parishes.pdf).

**What if we are getting married in another Diocese?** If your marriage preparation occurs in this diocese, but the marriage will take place in a different diocese, additional time is needed to coordinate with the other diocese. Discuss this with your priest or deacon.

**What if I or my fiancé have been married before?** Widows or widowers follow this same process. A death certificate for your prior spouse will be needed as proof of your freedom to marry. Your priest or deacon may have additional suggestions to help you prepare for marriage.

If one or both of you is divorced, all previous marriages, whether the parties are Catholic or not, must be declared null by the Office of the Tribunal before you may enter marriage in the Catholic Church. To begin the investigation regarding a declaration of nullity (annulment), speak with your priest or deacon, who will assist you in submitting the petition to the Tribunal. **NOTE:** A wedding date may not be set, even a tentative one, until such time that the declaration of nullity has been granted.

**Why does the Church require engaged couples to participate in marriage preparation?**

Marriage preparation offers couples the opportunity to develop a better understanding of Christian marriage; to assess and deepen their readiness to live married life; and to gain insights into themselves as individuals and as a couple.

**Is a Spanish-language marriage preparation program available?** Yes, a Spanish-language Sponsor Couple program is available in several parishes in the Diocese of Evansville. For more information, contact Bertha Melendres, Director of Hispanic Ministry (812-424-5536); email her at [bmelendres@evdio.org](mailto:bmelendres@evdio.org); or go to <https://www.evdio.org/ministerio-hispano-hispanic-ministry.html>.

**Where do Sponsor Couple meetings take place?** The series of 5-6 meetings typically takes place in the home of the sponsor couple or at the parish. Each meeting usually lasts approximately 90 minutes.

**What is UNVEILED?** This is an overnight retreat with other engaged couples that affords time for each couple to dialogue honestly about their future—their strengths and weaknesses, desires, ambitions, goals, attitudes toward money, sex, children, family and their role in the Church and society. Trained married couples lead the weekend.

**Where do UNVEILED weekends take place, when should I register, who may attend, and how much does it cost?**

Presently, UNVEILED weekends are held at the SARTO Retreat House in Evansville. Cost is \$225. Couples in a situation of true and demonstrated financial difficulty may call 812-424-5536 or email [egirten@evdio.org](mailto:egirten@evdio.org); assistance is available to those who would otherwise be unable to participate.

**We are unable to attend a preparation program in the Diocese of Evansville. What should we do?** Couples who cannot participate in one of these may, with the consent of their priest or deacon, attend a program in another diocese. Nearby (arch) dioceses such as Owensboro, Indianapolis, Louisville, Belleville, and Saint Louis also offer many programs to prepare couples for marriage in the Catholic Church. In exceptional circumstances, the priest or deacon may request an online marriage preparation program for the couple by contacting [egirten@evdio.org](mailto:egirten@evdio.org).

**We are getting married in another diocese. May we enroll in a marriage preparation program in the Diocese of Evansville?**

Speak with the priest or deacon who will be the officiant of your marriage. The other diocese may have its own specific requirements. UNVEILED is open to any engaged couple wanting to prepare for a deeper, more meaningful life together in a marriage recognized by the Catholic Church.

**What is Natural Family Planning?** All couples are encouraged to learn more about Natural Family Planning (NFP), which is an umbrella term for certain methods used to achieve or avoid pregnancy in marriage. These methods are based on observation of the naturally occurring signs and symptoms of the fertile and infertile phases of a woman's menstrual cycle. No drugs, devices, or surgical procedures are used to avoid pregnancy. More information is available at <https://www.evdio.org/natural-family-planning.html>.

**We are living together (cohabiting). Will one of us have to move out before the wedding?** Cohabitation is commonly understood to mean living together in a sexual relationship outside of marriage.

Cohabitation in itself does not prevent marriage. However, there may be other circumstances in which postponement of the marriage may be in order such as to resolve problems.

The Church realizes that there are many different reasons that couples cohabit. The Church clearly teaches that cohabitating, like sexual intercourse outside of marriage between people who are not married, "contradicts the meaning of sexual relationship in marriage as a total gift of oneself in fidelity, exclusivity, and permanency."

During marriage preparation, the priest or deacon may wish to know more about your particular circumstances and why you have decided to cohabit. Even if you are not able to separate prior to the marriage, he will encourage you to live chastely and abstain from sexual activity until marriage, thereby following Christ and His Church. This allows you to better focus on the relationship as a whole partnership of life (mind, body, and spirit).

Depending on your particular situation, he may also invite you to consider separate living so that you and your fiancé have time to individually reflect on your decision to marry.

If a couple is not able to separate prior to marriage and chooses to continue to present themselves publicly as husband and wife, their wedding liturgy should reflect that choice and be a simple ceremony; however, the choice of liturgy is left to the discretion of the priest or deacon.

**We have a pregnancy. May we get married in the Catholic Church?** The situation of pregnancy may not, by itself, prohibit a couple from getting married in the Catholic Church. However, the priest or deacon—so as to establish freedom to marry—may postpone the wedding if he determines that you seek to get married because you feel pressured by the situation of the pregnancy, especially if no plans for marriage had been made prior to learning of the pregnancy. This is not a penalty but an opportunity to pause and reflect on your lifelong commitment to one another in Christ Jesus.

**What is a Pre-Nuptial Investigation?** The pre-nuptial investigation, which the priest or deacon administers to you and your proposed spouse individually, is a series of questions that establishes that you are free to enter marriage in the Catholic Church; freely exchange your consent; and in consenting to marry, you have the intention to marry for life, to be faithful to one another and to be open to children. The Pre-Nuptial Investigation is designed to help you to understand the profound meaning of marriage in the Catholic Church.

**What is a Nuptial Mass and when may a couple have one?** A Nuptial Mass is a Mass which includes the celebration of Matrimony and has special readings and prayers. The Sacrament of Matrimony between two baptized Catholics is celebrated within Mass.

If reasons are present and permission is obtained, a Nuptial Mass may be celebrated for a marriage between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic, except that Communion is not given to the non-Catholic. Since marriage is a sign of unity, another option is to use the appropriate ritual for marriage outside of Mass when it is a marriage of mixed religion. Since a marriage between a baptized Catholic and a non-baptized person is not a sacrament, such marriages are always to take place outside of Mass.

**What is a valid Catholic marriage?** Every marriage is presumed to be valid unless proven otherwise since the Church strongly teaches the indissolubility of marriage. A valid Catholic marriage results from four elements: (1) the spouses are free to marry; (2) they freely exchange their consent; (3) in consenting to marry, they have the intention to marry for life, to be faithful to one another and be open to children; and (4) their consent is given in the presence of two witnesses and before a properly authorized Church minister. Exceptions to the last requirement must be approved by the Tribunal.

**Do our witnesses have to be Catholic?** While the priest or deacon stands as the Church's official witness, two other witnesses are also required. Customarily, this is the best man and maid or matron of honor. The other two witnesses must

be able to comprehend the event which is taking place and possess the use of reason. Preference is to be given to witnesses who are at least fourteen years old. They do not need to be of the opposite sex, or even Catholic.

**May a Catholic marry a validly baptized non-Catholic?** Yes, although the bishop or his delegate of the diocese where the Catholic party resides must grant permission for a marriage of mixed religion. Talk with your priest or deacon who will guide you through the steps for preparing for an interfaith marriage.

**May a Catholic marry a non-baptized person?** Yes, although the bishop or his delegate of the diocese where the Catholic party resides must grant a dispensation from disparity of worship for the validity of the marriage. Talk with your priest or deacon who will guide you through the steps for preparing for this marriage.

**NOTE:** If this will be a marriage between a Catholic and non-Catholic, additional permission or dispensations are necessary and will be requested from the Tribunal by the priest or deacon in the diocese where the Catholic person resides.

**Must a non-Catholic who marries a Catholic promise to rear the children in the Catholic faith?** It is the responsibility of the Catholic spouse who must promise to do all in his or her power to have the children baptized and reared in the Catholic faith. This promise is not to be taken lightly since it is a serious commitment and a genuine obligation. The non-Catholic spouse must be fully informed about this obligation of the Catholic spouse.

**May my fiancé's non-Catholic Christian minister participate in the wedding at the Catholic Church?** Yes; the non-Catholic Christian minister may be invited to sit in the sanctuary if he or she wishes. After the completion of the liturgy, the priest may invite the minister to offer his or her congratulations and encouragement to the couple, to pray for them, and to give a blessing.

**My fiancé is baptized but not Catholic. Can we marry at his or her church and still have it recognized as valid by the Catholic Church?** For sufficient reasons, it is possible for a Catholic to marry at the church of his or her baptized non-Catholic proposed spouse, although a dispensation from canonical form must be obtained from the bishop or his delegate of the diocese where the Catholic party resides. Talk with your priest or deacon about your plans, and he will help you take the necessary steps to petition for a dispensation. If a dispensation from canonical form has been granted, the marriage will be celebrated outside of Mass, and the non-Catholic minister will officiate according to his or her own ritual. In that case, a priest does not need to be present.

**We were married civilly, not in the Church. How do we have our marriage recognized by the Church?** Providing that both parties are free to marry, you may have your marriage recognized by the Church through *convalidation*, which is a Catholic marriage whereby you exchange your consent to each other before a priest or deacon and two witnesses, and are validly married in the Catholic Church. This ceremony is not simply a blessing of a civil marriage but is a new exchange of consent by which the couple is married in the Church.

If either party was previously married, he or she must first obtain a declaration of nullity (annulment). Please talk with your priest or deacon about the steps that need to be taken to have your civil marriage convalidated by the Church. The normal requirements of preparation for marriage are necessary for a convalidation, and opportunity is provided for many issues to be discussed during those meetings.

**Why does a Catholic wedding have to take place in a church?** For Catholics, marriage is not just a social or family event, but a Church event with an impact on the faith community. For this reason, marriages between Catholics, or between Catholics and other Christians, are to be celebrated in a parish church. Only the bishop or his delegate may permit a marriage to be celebrated in a suitable non-Catholic church.

**May we write our own vows?** No. The exchange of consent, or vows, is the moment in which the couple verbalizes before God and his Church the covenant relationship to which they are committing. There is a certain form that is followed in its celebration. The vows express the Catholic belief of what is happening at the moment of consent, and are essential to your consent in the celebration. It is for this reason that you must use the words of

consent given in the *Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, similar to how the priest is committed to use the words found in the Eucharistic Prayer at Mass.

**May my proposed spouse and I select the music and scriptural readings for the wedding?** Readings from Sacred Scripture are a key component of the celebration of all of the sacraments. The *Order of Celebrating Matrimony* provides many options from which the couple may choose with the assistance of the priest, deacon, or other parish staff. All readings at a marriage liturgy must be from Sacred Scripture as found in an approved *Lectionary*.

Music is often a very influential and important part of people's lives both in and out of worship. While the music for the marriage liturgy is one of the places that afford the most options, at the same time there are some guidelines that need to be followed in selecting liturgical music. You may help select the music used for the liturgy with the assistance and approval of the priest, deacon, or parish staff.

**How much does it cost to get married in the Catholic Church?** As the parish is providing a service to you—e.g., the priest or deacon ministers to you in marriage preparation, has the wedding rehearsal, and presides at the marriage; parish staff compile information for records; utilities of the building cost the parish; and others clean up following the ceremony—it is customary to make an offering to the parish. Ask your priest or deacon if there is an already determined amount that is expected for use of the church. Organist or vocalist fees may be separate as well as offerings for the servers. Although it is not required, you may desire to give a personal gift to the officiant.

**NOTE:** True financial hardship never prohibits marriage in the Catholic Church.

**May my pet be part of the wedding?** No; only people may take part in this sacred ceremony.

<https://www.foryourmarriage.org/>

<https://www.usccb.org/sites/default/files/flipbooks/catechism/402/>

<https://www.usccb.org/topics/marriage-and-family-life-ministries>