



LIVING OUR FAITH IN LOVE™

ONLINE PRE-CANA
OFFICIAL LEADER'S GUIDE

THEMARRIAGEGROUP.COM

OPENING PRAYER



Lord, we thank you for the ministry of your Holy Spirit who inspires us to share your love with others.

As we accompany couples through marriage preparation, help us walk in humility, relying fully on your insight and wisdom for every word we share.

As the creator of heaven and earth, your power to create beauty is limitless.

As the creator of love, your ability to connect us is profound.

As the author of truth, your desire to rescue us from sin is complete.

We submit to you as we endeavor to serve you and your Church.

We ask for your grace as we seek to honor you and proclaim the goodness of the sacrament of marriage.

And we praise you for the gift of family.

We lift these praises and requests to you through Christ our Lord,

Amen

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WELCOME!



Thank you for choosing The Marriage Group's online Pre-Cana course, *Living Our Faith in Love!*

We're excited that you'll be walking engaged couples through our course and becoming a part of their marriage formation journey.

One of the greatest gifts we can offer others is authenticity. We pray that you'll share honestly with the couples you serve and be a source of encouragement as they prepare for the realities of sacramental marriage.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

Single-Use, One Couple

We suggest pre-watching all course videos before you meet with the engaged couple. This guide provides an outline of each topic, followed by questions you can ask the couple you're leading. It also provides space for you to record some of the couple's answers to those questions. The writing prompts, prayers, and quotes are included to encourage you and provide space for your reflections. A Couple Record for one couple is provided for your personal or parish record of this part of the couple's marriage prep journey.

Multiple-Use, Many Couples

Once you've previewed all the videos in our course, you can use this guide to record your own notes and personal reflections. It will serve as a master guide that you can use with many couples.

Each time you lead a new couple through the course, you can use this guide to direct conversations in your meetings with them. If you'd like to record their responses to questions or create a record of your meetings, use a new Couple Record along with this guide. Additional Couple Records can be downloaded on our website or photocopied from this guide.



Iron is sharpened by iron; one person sharpens another.

PROVERBS 27:17

WAYS TO USE THE COURSE

SELF-LED

Engaged Couples Working Through The Program On Their Own Time

Couples register for the course and gain access to the online portal. After filling out the intake form, they receive instructions to download or print a “His” and “Hers” Discussion Guide. The guides provide relevant questions, journaling prompts, and conversation starters that encourage meaningful reflections and conversations throughout the course.

The guides follow along with the video teaching which covers prescribed topics for thorough preparation for the sacrament of marriage. Each video series ends with a quiz to ensure couples have a proper understanding of the principles taught.

When all course videos and quizzes have been completed, couples can download and print their official Certificate of Completion. The certificate can be emailed or hand-delivered to the parish where their wedding will take place.

MENTOR-LED

Engaged Couples Working With A Facilitator, Clergy, or Sponsor Couple

Completion of Living Our Faith In Love with a leader can be accomplished in many ways. The course is flexible for both couples and those leading them through the experience, so we encourage you to set up a system that works for you.

Here are a few examples of how leaders use our course:

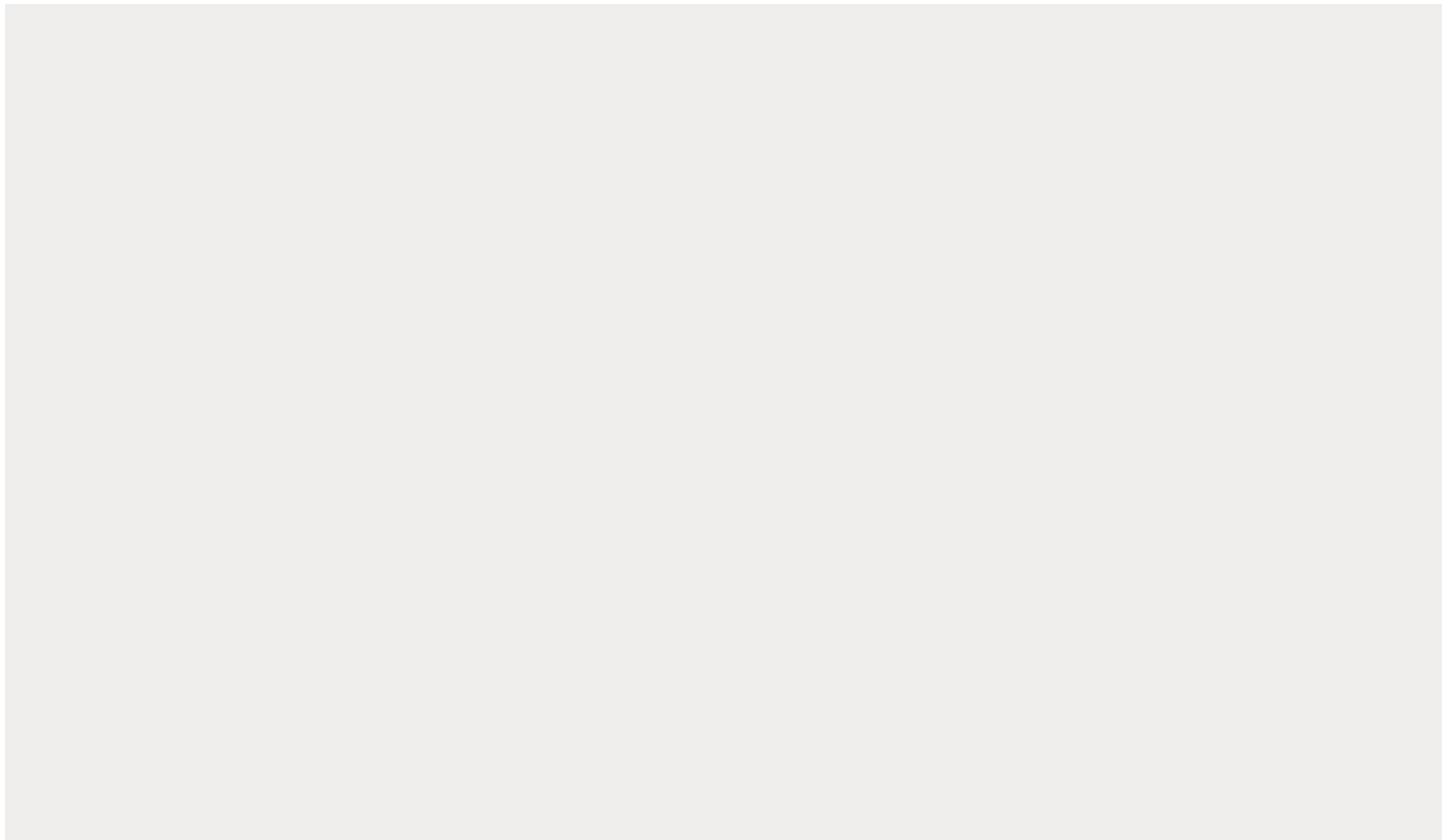
Nine Weekly Meetings: Initial “Get-to-know-you” meeting followed by one meeting per week for 8 weeks. Between meetings, couples watch all videos in one topic and complete the His and Hers Discussion Guides on their own. At the weekly meeting, leaders will direct the conversation using this Leader’s Guide, and couples can discuss anything that came up during their private study.

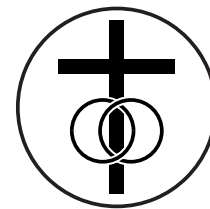
WAYS TO USE THE COURSE

Three Meetings in Three Months: First meeting establishes expectations and provides time for prayer and encouragement. Second meeting is a check-in at the halfway point with time for couples to ask questions and leaders to provide direction, prayer, and encouragement. Final meeting to confirm completion of the course, receive Certificate of Completion for parish records, and finalize details of the wedding ceremony. This could also include time for prayer and the sacrament of reconciliation.

Monthly Marriage Prep - 6 Months: (Works with one couple/leader or small groups): Leaders meet with couples to explain the course and its components. Couples work through the course at their own pace, taking notes about topics and situations they'd like to discuss with leaders. Then, the couples and leaders get together for a monthly meeting. They engage in a relationship-building activity like a shared meal, ice-breaker questions, or a board game. After the fun, leaders pray for the couple/s and initiate a discussion based on one of the video topics and/or the couple's/s' questions.

Your Plan for Leading Couples:





OUTLINE

PART 1: GOD'S PLAN

God's Plan for Humanity

God created humans in his own image to love Him and one another. They are called to have a personal relationship with God. Spirituality is how people live out their personal relationship with him in their daily lives.

God's Plan for Human Sexuality

Sexuality is a gift from God. It continues the plan of creation for human life, and it provides a very tangible way for a husband and wife to complement each other.

Marriage is one of the seven sacraments of the Catholic church.

The two purposes of marriage are unitive and procreative.

PART 2: MARRIAGE AS A SACRAMENT

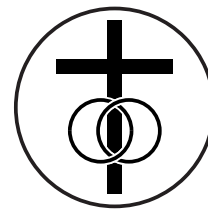
The sacrament of marriage is part of the plan of creation. The sacraments are the doors that welcome people in to more active participation in the life of the church. Marriage is one of the Sacraments at the Service of Communion.

PART 3: MARRIAGE AS A VOCATION

A vocation points people toward serving God. Marriage points them toward serving God, each other, and the community. Couples who pray together and for each other will cultivate their spirituality.

PART 4: MARRIAGE AS A COVENANT

A covenant is an agreement between God and his people. Marriage is indissoluble.



QUESTIONS FOR THE ENGAGED COUPLE:

How can you serve God together as a married couple?

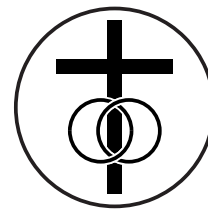
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How can you be open to life?

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How can you stay connected to creation as a couple?

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In choosing marriage, you have chosen it as your vocation. How can you live your choice every day?

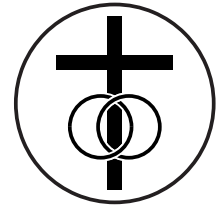
PRAYER:

My Lord God,
I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end.
nor do I really know myself,
and the fact that I think I am following your will
does not mean that I am actually doing so.
But I believe that the desire to please you
does in fact please you.
And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.
I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.
And I know that if I do this, you will lead me by the right road,
though I may know nothing about it.
Therefore will I trust you always though
I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.
I will not fear, for you are ever with me,
and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Amen. (The Merton Prayer by Thomas Merton)

“We should ever be grateful for and love the vocation to which God has called us. This applies to every vocation because, after all, what a privilege it is to serve God, even in the least capacity!”

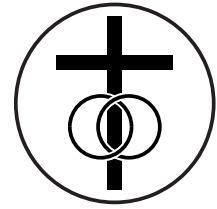
SOLANUS CASEY



WRITING PROMPT FOR LEADER:

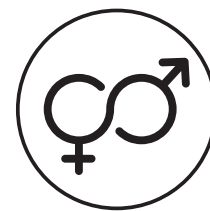
What does “vocation” mean to you? Openness to life? How can understanding your calling in those areas help you serve others?

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NOTES:

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OUTLINE

1. THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE, SEX, AND INTIMACY

The beauty of marriage is always learning more about each other. Communication is vital to maintaining intimacy. Man and woman are made for each other and to carry out God's plan. The purpose of sex and intimacy in marriage is unitive and procreative.

2. NURTURING INTIMACY

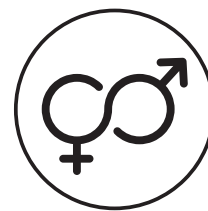
Cultural interpretations of the purpose of sex and previous behaviors need to be reconciled to nurture intimacy. Intimacy can be physical, emotional, and spiritual. Communication is vital to all three.

3. ROMANCE AND DATING

Dating and making each other a priority help to nurture intimacy in a marriage. Keeping romance alive takes intention and planning.

4. GROWING IN MARITAL INTIMACY

Couples will always have to work on trust and forgiveness. Resources for growing in intimacy can include the Sacrament of Reconciliation and good counseling. They should surround themselves with Christian communities and those who can keep them accountable to honor their marriage.



QUESTIONS FOR THE ENGAGED COUPLE:

In what areas of your relationship can you see God's plan for your lives? What gifts do you have as a couple (like hospitality, generosity, mercy, etc.) that help express God's love for the world?

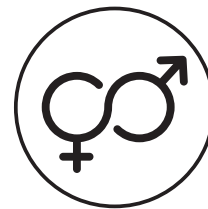
[Empty response area for the first question]

Where can you improve communication for better physical, emotional, and spiritual connection?

[Empty response area for the second question]

What can you do to prioritize dating and romance once you are married?

[Empty response area for the third question]



Do you have good role models or a community that will support your marriage and hold you accountable? If so, who are they? If not, how can you actively seek these people out?

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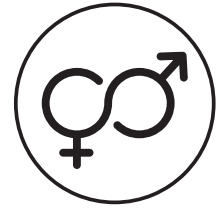
PRAYER:

Strong marriages build strong families and strong communities. Please, God, help this couple have a strong marriage and be intimately aware of each other. Guide them to seek connection physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Please help them develop an unbreakable bond that gives you glory and fulfills your plan for them.

Amen.

“This is a serious warning cry: Surrender without reservation to the Lord who has called us. This is required of us so that the face of the earth may be renewed.”

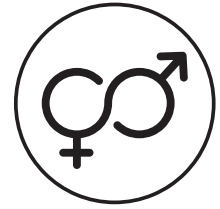
BLESSED CARLO ACUTIS



WRITING PROMPT FOR LEADER:

How does the need for spiritual, emotional, and physical intimacy express itself in your life? How have you learned to fulfill those needs in healthy and God-honoring ways?

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OUTLINE

1. FORMING THE NEW FAMILY

A new marriage is a new family, but each partner's family of origin is also part of the new family. Faith life experiences differ between families.

2. MARRIAGE AND COMMITMENT WITHIN YOUR FAMILY OF ORIGIN

People have different family experiences. Some had a traditional nuclear family, and some experienced divorce, death of a parent, or blended families. These realities influence perceptions of commitment and hopes and fears regarding marriage.

3. WHEN FAMILY ISSUES DIRECTLY IMPACT YOUR MARRIAGE

Situations such as illness of extended family members can impact marriages in different ways.

4. THE FOUR PILLARS OF MARRIAGE

Communication: The family of origin's conflict-management style can influence your marriage.

Romance & Intimacy: Levels of comfort with showing affection vary between families.

Money: The family of origin's finances and their handling of them can influence a couple's approach to shared finances.

Parenting: Parenting styles of your family of origin need to be examined.

5. WHEN FAMILY ISSUES DIRECTLY IMPACT YOUR MARRIAGE

Families of origin have differing ways of honoring traditions, celebrating holidays, and setting boundaries. Getting married and starting a new family presents an opportunity to start new traditions. No one has a perfect family, but we are called to have a *holy family*.



QUESTIONS FOR THE ENGAGED COUPLE:

How would you describe your family of origin?

[Empty text box for response]

How could situations with families of origin, such as illnesses or crises, be an opportunity for growth in your marriage?

[Empty text box for response]

How is your relationship affected by your family of origin now?

[Empty text box for response]



Have you ever talked about how your family handled communication, especially when there was a conflict? What about money? Parenting? How did they show affection to each other?

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PRAYER:

God, you gave us our families of origin for a reason. We can learn from their successes and their failures. Please help us to accept our parents as the flawed, yet treasured, children of God that they are. Please help this engaged couple learn and grow as they create a new family as a married couple, and please let them be a light to each other and their extended families.

Amen.

“We become what we love and who we love shapes what we become.”

CLARE OF ASSISI



WRITING PROMPT FOR LEADER:

Reflect on your family of origin. What blessings and challenges have you faced because of your family? How have you grown as a result?

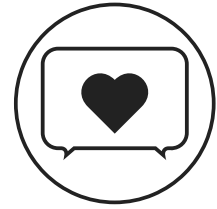
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FAMILY OF ORIGIN



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OUTLINE

1. GAINING SKILLS FOR HEALTHY COMMUNICATION

Personality differences and perspectives can cause conflict. Skills are needed to avoid and resolve conflicts. Skills build intimacy and confidence. Marriages also need compassion and loving-kindness. Love is a decision and an action, a way of being and doing.

2. THREE QUALITIES OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Self-disclosure - self-awareness and being in touch with feelings.

Active listening - engaging with what is heard as well as feelings, emotions, experiences.

Gained insight - the prize of effective dialogue; learning and growing in your marriage.

3. THE ROLE OF RECONCILIATION

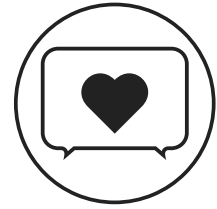
Good reconciliation recognizes the difference between forgiving and excusing and whether either is appropriate. In attempts to forgive and forget, couples may minimize problems.

True reconciliation requires:

1. Acknowledgment
2. Earnest Response
3. Understanding
4. Commitment to change

4. PRAYER AND THE VOCATION OF MARRIAGE

Couples need a shared spirituality. Families strive for justice, which is rightness. Families need to love tenderly.



QUESTIONS FOR THE ENGAGED COUPLE:

What skills do you need to improve or learn to better handle conflict?

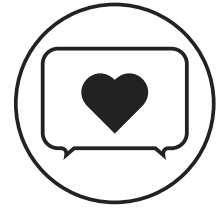
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Do you consider love a choice and an action? How?

Blank response area for the question: "Do you consider love a choice and an action? How?"

How can you grow in your ability to actively listen and communicate effectively?

Blank response area for the question: "How can you grow in your ability to actively listen and communicate effectively?"



What do you think your marriage's mission is?

Which aspect of true reconciliation is most difficult for you: acknowledgment, earnest response, understanding, or commitment to change?

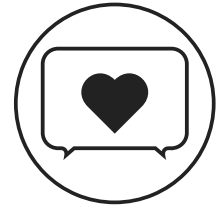
PRAYER:

We are broken people living in a broken world. Nothing is easy. Conflict is inevitable as we journey through life together. Help this couple remember what first brought them together and strengthen their love, even in the midst of conflict. Please help them become masters of reconciliation, resolution, and forgiveness as they grow closer to each other and to you, Lord.

Amen.

“Receive every trial, every annoyance, every lack of courtesy in the light that springs from the Cross; that is how we please God, how we advance in the ways of love.”

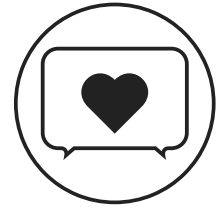
ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY



WRITING PROMPT FOR LEADER:

What tips on avoiding conflict and resolving conflict have you learned in your life? What does reconciliation mean to you?

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OUTLINE

1. SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES OF MONEY MANAGEMENT

Humans are valued regardless of financial status.

Red Flags:

1. Prioritizing money above health and at the expense of relationships
2. Living beyond your means

2. LEARNING HOW TO TALK ABOUT MONEY

Keys to Unlocking Good Conversations About Money:

- Understand what money symbolizes for your partner
- Approach one another as people of goodwill
- Agree to avoid secrets

3. HOW TO RESOLVE TOP MONEY FIGHTS

Couples should figure out a system that works for them, discover who is best suited for each role, and pray about what their parish contribution will be.

What are they going to fight about? *Overspending, Expense to Income Ratio, Disorganization.*

4. PRACTICAL TIPS AND ORGANIZATION

Money Tools:

Having a budget and a system for organizing their finances is essential. Ideas for organization include a bill folder, long and short-term file boxes, and a family email address.

It is also important to have proper insurance coverage and plan for the future with retirement savings and preparing a Last Will and Testament.

Debt should be used wisely and sparingly to prevent overspending and sabotaging future goals.



QUESTIONS FOR THE ENGAGED COUPLE:

What value does money have for you? Are you comfortable talking about money with your future spouse?

Empty response area for the first question.

What is your current money management system? How can you improve it when you start your life as a married couple?

Empty response area for the second question.

What practical tips from the video would help you organize or plan your finances better?

Empty response area for the third question.



PRAYER:

God, we understand money is necessary for living and has power for good or for conflict. Please help this couple begin their married life with honesty, clarity, and hopefulness about their financial future together. Please let money be the least of their worries and help them find the tools to be stewards of the resources you have given them for the betterment of their marriage, their family, and their community.

Amen.

**“Our goal must be infinite, not the finite. The infinite is our homeland.
Heaven has been waiting for us forever.”**

BLESSED CARLO ACUTIS



WRITING PROMPT FOR LEADER:

Have you found a way to separate your worth as a child of God from your financial net worth? If not, what is holding you back? If so, what can you share with the couple to help them have a godly perspective on finances?

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OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION TO NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

1. WHAT IS NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING?

NFP is the general title for scientific, natural, and moral methods of family planning that can help married couples either achieve or postpone pregnancy. These methods support God's design for married love.

2. BENEFITS OF NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

NFP promotes healthy communication and respect within a marriage. It has no side effects and is completely free. NFP avoids the need for sterilization. NFP is the only family planning method endorsed by the Catholic church.

3. WHAT TO EXPECT & NEXT STEPS

Women can monitor their health with cycle charting. Understanding the signs of fertility can help women more closely monitor their health. Increased communication helps couples connect emotionally and spiritually.

THE SCIENCE & RESEARCH OF NFP

1. AN OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH, THE DATA, & THE METHODS

There are several methods of natural family planning based on scientific research. The Calendar Method (predicting ovulation by tracking menstruation) is NOT an effective method of natural family planning.

2. WHO CAN USE NFP AND WHEN TO START CHARTING

Ovulation is the main event when tracking fertility, not bleeding. The hormones present during ovulation affect all aspects of a woman's health. Charting ovulation creates a big picture that gives insight into overall health, and women can start charting at any time.



OUTLINE

3. THE ARTIFICIAL CONTRACEPTION DILEMMA

The Catholic Church does not promote the use of any form of artificial contraception.

Women are prescribed oral contraceptives for a variety of health issues, but there are alternatives to treating these conditions. Artificial contraception is not 100% effective and comes with many side effects.

UNDERSTANDING, TRACKING, AND CHARTING BIOMARKERS

1. UNDERSTANDING BIOMARKERS

The Fertile Window is the period of time a woman is most likely to become pregnant.

Biomarkers are the signs a woman's body sends that indicate that she is fertile. The biomarkers of fertility are bleeding, mucus development, Basal Body Temperature, and LH hormone level.

2. TRACKING BIOMARKERS

Consistency is key to tracking biomarkers and using NFP successfully. Biomarkers should be tracked daily and charted according to the method of NFP being used.

3. CHARTING BIOMARKERS

Paper charts, apps based on NFP, or monitors are all great ways to keep track of biomarkers.



QUESTIONS FOR THE ENGAGED COUPLE:

Do you have any questions about Natural Family Planning?

[Empty response area for questions about Natural Family Planning]

How can increased communication about the wife's natural cycles help your marriage?

[Empty response area for communication about natural cycles]

What health benefits of Natural Family Planning appeal to you?

[Empty response area for health benefits of NFP]



What factors would help you discern whether to try to achieve or postpone pregnancy?

Empty response area for factors helping to discern pregnancy decisions.

What fears do you have about using Natural Family Planning? How can you address them?

Empty response area for fears about using Natural Family Planning and how to address them.

PRAYER:

God, trusting your will is a great challenge at times. Trusting you with family planning is so different from the norms in our society. Help this couple face any challenges to their plans with confidence in your great providence. Grow in them an unshakeable faith in each other and in you, Lord. Make yourself the center of their lives so they can experience the joys and sorrows of family planning with faithfulness and trust.

Amen.

“In God’s will, there is great peace.”

JOSEPHINE BAKHITA



WRITING PROMPT FOR LEADER:

Reflect on the spiritual and practical aspects of natural family planning. What insight can you offer couples on how to grow in this area?

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OUTLINE

1. IDENTIFYING VALUES & PRIORITIES

Couples need assurance that their marriage is the primary relationship; above friends, extended family, and even children.

Values are what we determine to be highly important, who we want to be. Examples: marriage, faith, children, careers, extended family, home, personal integrity.

Priorities are the things we must do everyday to live well. They are derived from our values and can include housework, jobs, childcare, shopping, physical exercise, entertainment.

2. PRIMACY - PUTTING YOUR MARRIAGE FIRST

It can be easy to take your good relationship for granted and not give it the priority it deserves. Marriage is the primary earthly relationship, and couples will have to be intentional about prioritizing it. Practicing loving habits and establishing love rituals can help them stay connected and fuel intimacy.

3. PURPOSE - YOUR MARRIAGE MISSION

Couples need to recognize and embrace their role as a living sacrament, a reflection of God, and evidence that God exists.

A marriage mission statement says who you are, what you are about, who you want to be, and what's important.

The statement must acknowledge the grit and grace of marriage, otherwise it won't be relevant or useful.



QUESTIONS FOR THE ENGAGED COUPLE:

What values did you identify? Which values do you share? Where were there differences?

Empty response area for the first question.

What do you prioritize that could compete with your relationship with your future spouse?

Empty response area for the second question.

How will you keep your marriage as the most important human relationship in your life?

Empty response area for the third question.



What do you think your marriage's mission is? What about your future family's mission?

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PRAYER:

God, please bring this couple close to you and help them determine Your will for them. Help them know your place for them in this world, so they can discover their mission and work together to achieve it. Help them put their marriage first in their lives, only after You, by making each other a priority and loving each other completely.

Amen.

“No one should follow what he considers to be good for himself, but rather what seems good for another. Let them put Christ before all else; and may he lead us all to everlasting life.”

ST. BENEDICT



WRITING PROMPT FOR LEADER:

Have you ever crafted a mission statement? If so, what is it? If not, what could it be? Can you help the couple discern the things that they should say “yes” to and the things that might be a “no”?

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LIVING OUR FAITH IN LOVE™

COUPLE RECORDS & NOTES

THEMARRIAGEGROUP.COM



GROOM'S NAME

BRIDE'S NAME

AGE

AGE

WEDDING DATE

NOTES ON FAMILY STRUCTURE

DOCUMENTS NEEDED

GROOM BRIDE

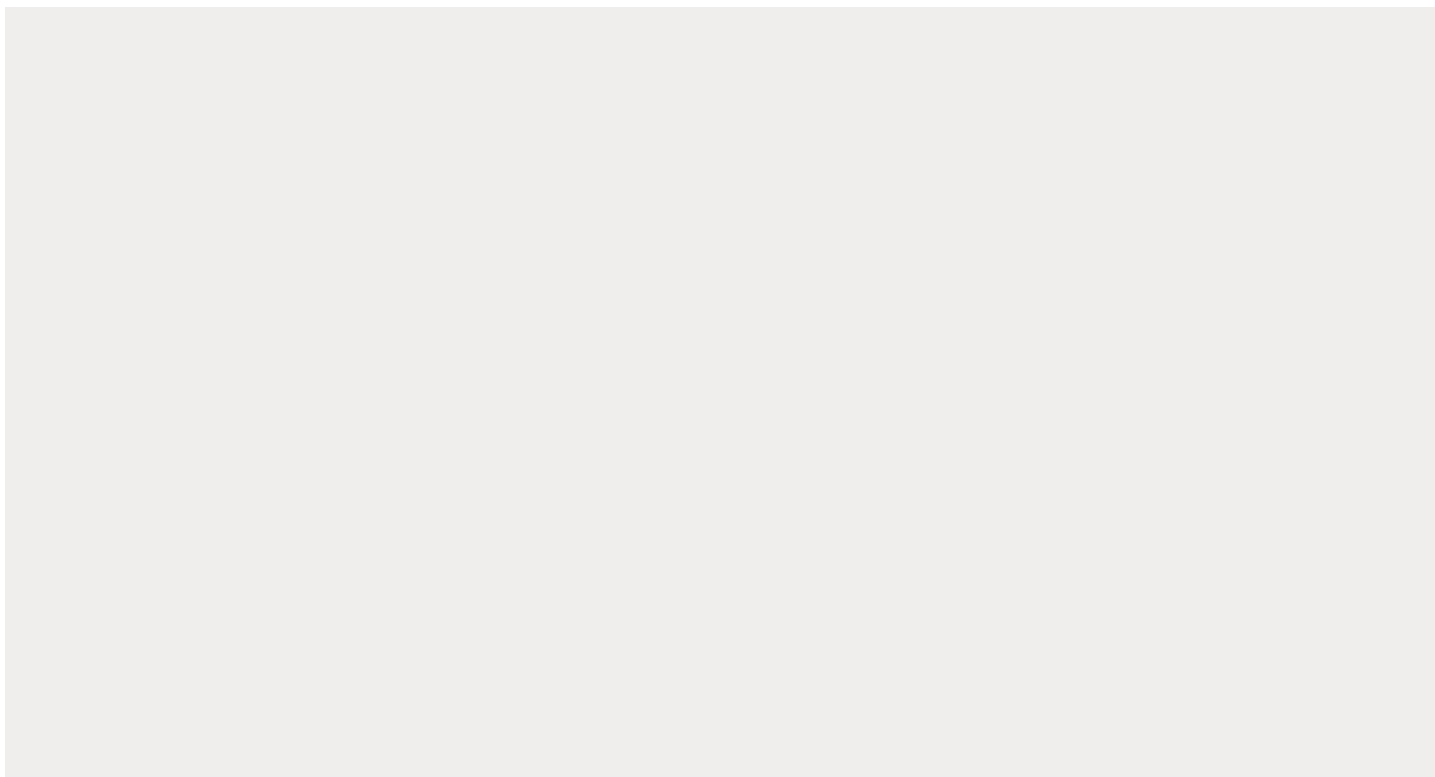
- BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE
- CONFIRMATION
- STATE LICENSE

GROOM BRIDE

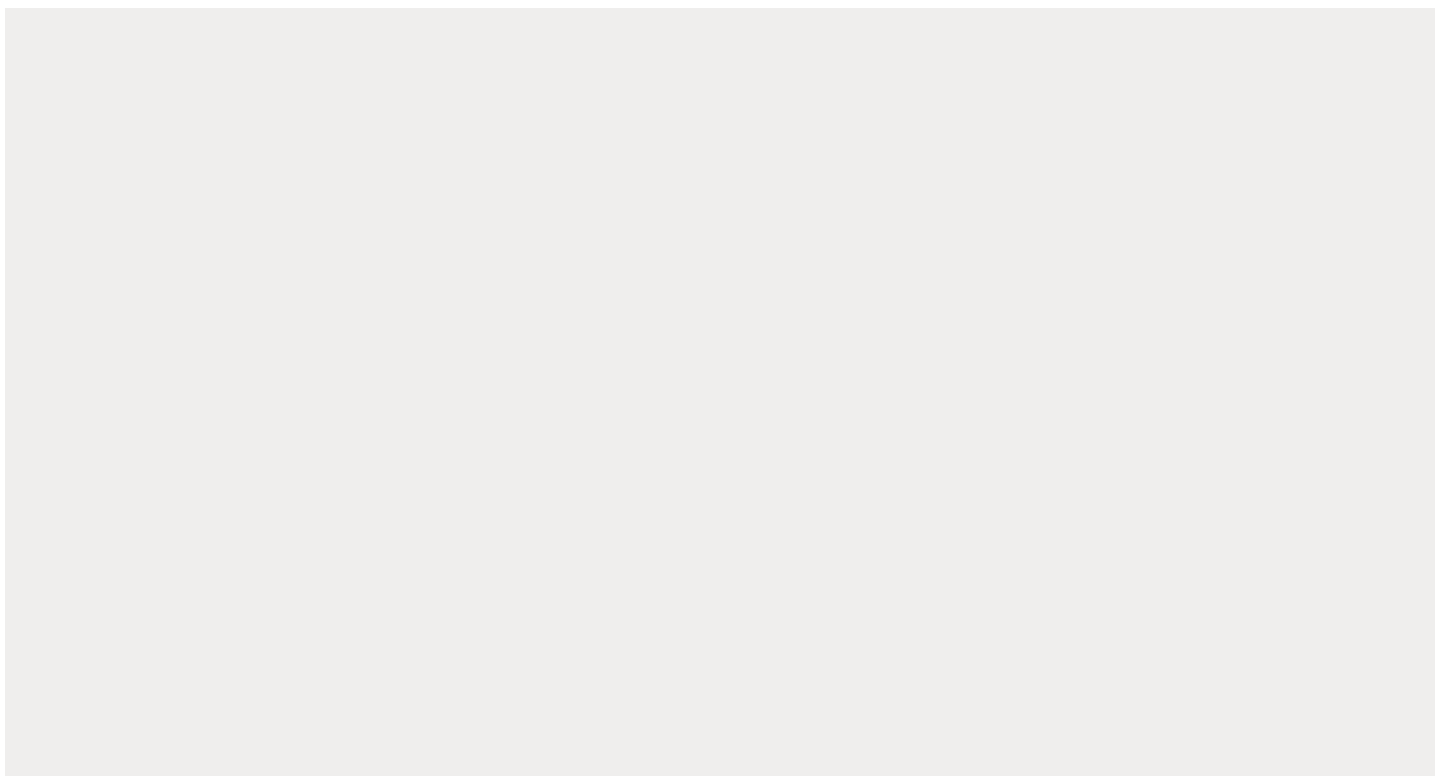
- PRE-CANA CERTIFICATE
- NFP CERTIFICATE
- _____



THEOLOGY & SPIRITUALITY OF MARRIAGE



THE BEAUTY OF SEXUALITY & INTIMACY IN MARRIAGE





FAMILY OF ORIGIN

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BECOMING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATORS

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FINANCES

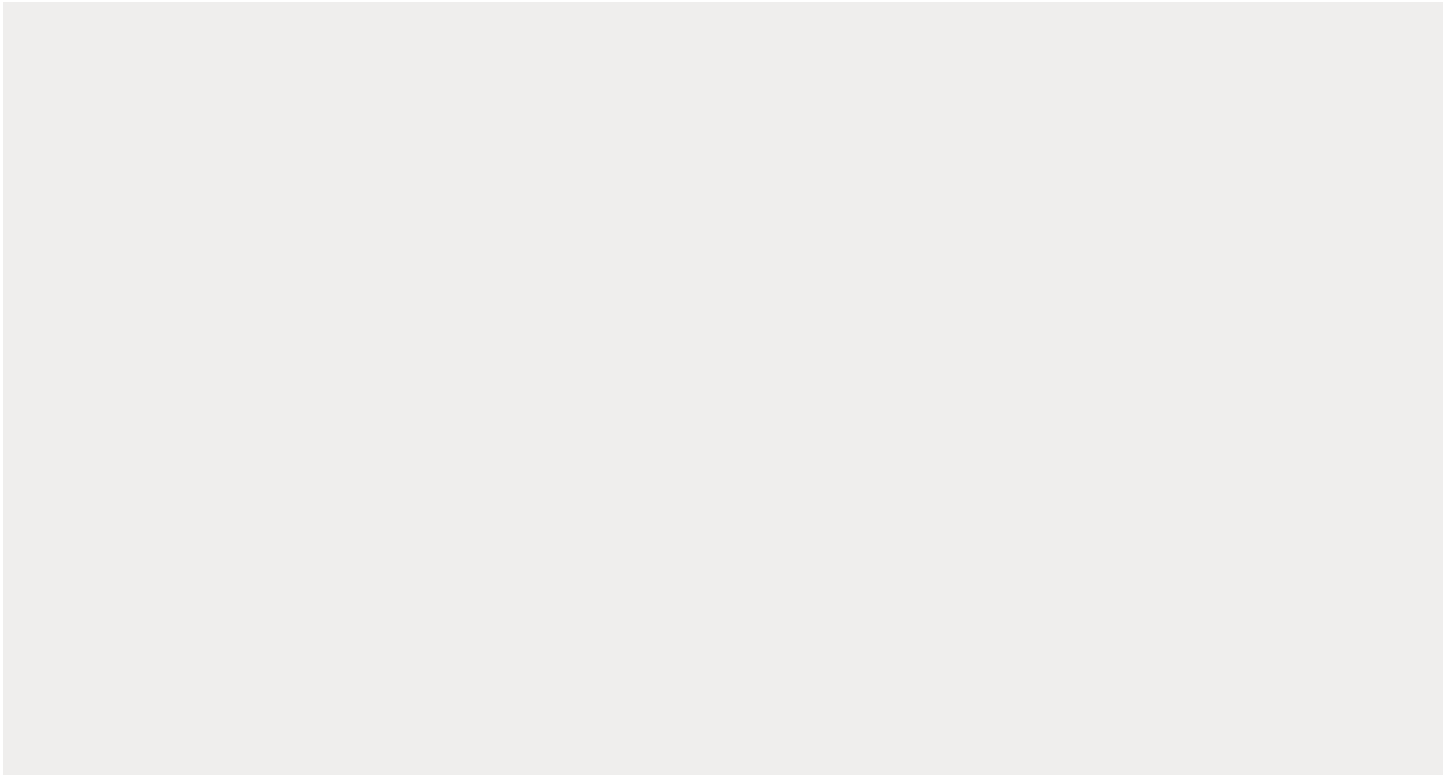
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NFP LIFE®

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THE MISSION & PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE



WITH GRATITUDE



Thank you for sharing the blessing of sacramental marriage and the truth of **the Gospel of Jesus Christ**.

May the Lord bless you and keep you as you serve him and his glorious Church.





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