

Steps One through Five of the Marriage Preparation in the Archdiocese of Omaha

Step One

Contact your parish to begin the marriage prep process. You must have the approval of your pastor to register for marriage preparation and complete the *FOCCUS* or *REFOCCUS* Inventory. The parish will provide a copy of the Engaged Couple Guide for Catholic Marriage Preparation. This resource includes valuable information and discussion questions as well as a guide for planning the marriage rite. If either or both of you have been previously married, civilly or in the Catholic Church or any other faith tradition, a decree of nullity (annulment) must have been granted and the written decree provided to the priest prior to your registering for marriage preparation. The parish may also provide a Marriage Prep Brochure or you may download one from the Marriage Preparation homepage.

Step Two

Selecting Education Program(s)

Referring to the Marriage Preparation (MP) Brochure, determine which educational program(s) are required for you as part of the preparation process. Approved programs include:

- *Catholic Engaged Encounter (CEE)*
- *Marriage a Journey for Life (MAJ)*
- Parenting/Step-Parenting class - *Family, Become What You Are*, for couples who have children.

Dates for all available programs will be shown after you have read the 5 Steps and have begun the actual registration and payment process. A transaction fee will be automatically added and shown at time of registration and selection of payment method; please choose your class date carefully as an additional transaction fee is incurred when transferring to a different class date.

Please note that once you have registered for your educational program(s), there will be a 3 – 5 day window of time before you receive an e-mail with the log in and password information necessary for each of you to complete the FOCCUS Pre-Marriage Inventory. Please allow the 5 day window before contacting the marriage prep specialist regarding your registration. **Couples**

Marrying for the First Time

- Couples in which both persons are marrying for the first time have the option of attending CEE or MAJ.
- Additionally, any couple entering into marriage for the first time with sons and/or daughters of any age is strongly encouraged to take part in the Parenting/Step Parenting program.

Details on all programs provided below.

Civilly Married Couples

- Couples civilly married five or less years attend MAJ. They are also encouraged to attend the Parenting/Step-Parenting program if they have son(s) or daughter(s) of any age.
- Couples civilly married more than five years attend a program as may be required by their priest and complete REFOCCUS.

Details on all programs provided below.

Remarriage Couples

- This category refers to couples who are marrying for the second or subsequent time, when one or both of them have experienced the death of a previous spouse and/or a civil divorce followed by the granting of a decree of nullity (annulment).
- Couples in a remarriage situation are required to attend MAJ-R.
- Couples in a remarriage situation also are required to attend Parenting/Step-Parenting when either of them have son(s) or daughter(s) of any age.

Details on all programs provided below.

Both CEE and MAJ offer unique experiences to couples preparing for marriage. Couples are encouraged to prayerfully consider their options and choose the one that offers the best opportunity for them to intentionally prepare for marriage. Any couple needing financial assistance is encouraged to speak with their priest regarding scholarships which are available through the parish and/or the Family Life Office.

Catholic Engaged Encounter **\$200**

For couples entering into marriage for the first time, CEE is an opportunity to share a weekend, away from distractions, with other engaged couples. The focus is to offer each individual couple time to talk intensively and privately on many aspects of married life (family of origin, communication, finances, marital intimacy, children, religion) always from the viewpoint of their personal relationship. A team of 2 married couples and clergy offer presentations on this weekend which begins Saturday morning and continues through Sunday afternoon. Reconciliation is offered; Mass is celebrated; all faiths welcome. Find dates, registration and payment information online at:

Norfolk CEE - www.catholicee.com

Omaha CEE - www.omahacee.org

Marriage: A Journey for Life (MAJ) **\$150**

Beginning January 2013, couples will select a Friday evening/full day Saturday class. The class begins on Friday with a session from 6:30 – 9:30 p.m. and couples return on Saturday for a full day, 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Within the context of presentations by trained facilitators, use of media, large group activities, couple discussion time and prayer, couples will consider the dynamics of their own relationship and communication learned in their family of origin and ways they and their love will be gift for each other, the community and larger society. Presentations include Theology of the Body, Natural Family Planning, stewardship and finances, as well as spirituality and theology related to the vocation of marriage. The fee for this program includes the FOCCUS/REFOCCUS Inventory, all materials and food, and the option to attend the Parenting/Step Parenting class if applicable.

MAJ-V (Convalidation)

MAJ-V is for couples who were civilly married outside the Catholic Church and who are now preparing for a valid marriage in the Church. Standard class options with corresponding fee shown below.

- Couples civilly married for five years or less follow the standard sequence of completing FOCCUS followed by CEE or MAJ (selecting from the MAJ dates with corresponding \$150 fee).
- Couples civilly married for more than five years complete REFOCCUS with a priest and may or may not attend an educational program with corresponding fee as directed by their priest (\$30 or \$150).

MAJ-R (Remarriage) \$150

MAJ-R is required for couples who are entering into a second or subsequent marriage when one or both of them have experienced the death of a previous spouse *or* a civil divorce followed by the granting of a written declaration of nullity (annulment). Set within the context of the Catholic faith, couples consider the strengths and challenges that a previous marriage brings to the relationship. Class content is specific to couples who are entering into marriage after the loss of a previous relationship through death or divorce and topics include recognizing the impact of the loss of the previous relationship as well as the tasks of combining households and forming relationships with new family members.

Any couple taking this class who has sons or daughters of any age must also register for the Parenting/Step-Parenting class- *Family, Become What You Are*. (See below)

Please note that in the case of civil divorce for either person, and regardless of whether the first marriage was in the Catholic Church, a written decree of nullity (annulment) must be on file with the priest preparing you for marriage before you register for marriage preparation.

Beginning January 2013, couples will select a Friday evening/full day Saturday class. The class begins on Friday with a session from 6:30 – 9:30 p.m. and couples return on Saturday for a full day, 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

The fee for this program includes the FOCCUS/REFOCCUS Inventory, all materials and food, and the option to attend the Parenting/Step Parenting class if applicable.

FOCCUS/REFOCCUS only option \$30

(marriageprep@archomaha.org must be contacted to select this option)

This option is to be chosen by any couple who is

- Attending Catholic Engaged Encounter (\$195/200 payment will be made separately and directly to CEE Norfolk/Omaha; the link to these CEE websites will be provided at end of this registration process), or
- Being prepared by a priest in the Archdiocese of Omaha *and only* completing the FOCCUS or REFOCCUS Inventory and participating in facilitated sessions

This fee includes the Supplemental Materials resource manual, your FOCCUS/REFOCCUS inventory, and the Parenting/Step-Parenting program (if applicable). A Couple Certificate of Completion will be provided for you.

Parenting/Step-Parenting – *Family, Become What You Are* No fee for couples registered for Marriage Preparation

Saturday 8:30 – 11:30 a.m or Thursday 6:30 – 9:30 p.m. throughout the year

All couples registered for MAJ-R (Remarriage) are required to register for this class when either or both have sons and/or daughters of any age.

Additionally, any couple entering into marriage for the first time with sons and/or daughters of any age is strongly encouraged to take part in this Parenting/Step- Parenting class.

Set within the context of the Catholic faith, couples will have intentional time to consider and discuss their marriage vows, how marriage can affect children of all ages in different ways, family identity and mission, the family’s call to holiness, parenting theory and practice, and special parenting situations. There is no additional fee for any registered marriage prep couple to take the Parenting/Step- Parenting class, regardless of whether you attend *CEE* or *MAJ*.

If you or your priest have any questions regarding educational options and payment, or for one-on-one assistance with registration or completion of the FOCCUS/REFOCCUS inventory, please contact the marriageprep@archomaha.org, or the Family Life Office, 402.551.9003 X 1302 or 888.800.8352.

Natural Family Planning (NFP)

NFP information is offered as part of both CEE and MAJ. The best way to practice or learn more about NFP is to complete a full course of NFP classes as offered by our approved providers; Couple-to-Couple League and FertilityCare. Information on classes offered by these providers, including fees, is available on their websites. For general questions or assistance in choosing a provider, contact the Family Life Office; see back of brochure for contact info.

Couple-to-Couple League www.cclomaha.org

FertilityCare www.fertilitycare.org

Step Three

Completing the FOCCUS Pre-Marriage or REFOCCUS Inventory

Along with the required Education Program(s), all couples are required to complete the FOCCUS Pre-Marriage Inventory or REFOCCUS according to the guidelines outlined in the MP Brochure and the directive of your priest. Couples entering into marriage the first time and couples civilly married for five years or less complete FOCCUS along with CEE or MAJ. Couples civilly married for more than five years complete REFOCCUS and attend an educational program as required by their priest. FOCCUS is generally taken online; REFOCCUS is available in hard copy form only.

Both FOCCUS and REFOCCUS are used with couples around the world and are designed to assist in identifying and supporting facilitated discussion of key topic areas. A certified FOCCUS, Inc. USA facilitator who is often a priest or deacon will support you in recognizing and discussing areas which may benefit you in problem-solving or developing new skills as well as affirming areas of strength. These facilitated sessions should be completed prior to taking part in CEE or MAJ and the Parenting/Step-Parenting Class.

As you prepare to complete the FOCCUS or REFOCCUS Inventory, it is important to remember that an Inventory is NOT a test. It cannot be passed or failed and there is no right or wrong answer, instead only your opinion about various statements. When you complete the Inventory, it is important that both of you respond independently to the statements in order to maintain the integrity and purpose of the process and so that each of you may receive full benefit from this opportunity to learn more about yourself and each other.

Your responses provide a snapshot of your relationship at the time you complete the inventory and once completed you may have new awareness regarding topics already discussed and those needing further discussion. Your responses to the Inventory statements are unique to you as individuals and as a couple, and as soon as both of you have completed the Inventory you are encouraged to begin discussing any of the Inventory items that come to mind. Enjoy the exploration of new or familiar topic areas and learning more about yourself and each other. Your relationship will benefit by your commitment to communicating with each other now and for the rest of your life together.

Attending FOCCUS/REFOCCUS Facilitation Sessions

After completing the Inventory, your results will be sent to your priest. He will determine who will facilitate your discussion of the results of your FOCCUS or REFOCCUS Inventory. When you meet with your designated facilitator, you will review and discuss specific items and issues identified through your

responses. Both your results and your facilitated discussions will remain confidential between you and your priest and your facilitator if different from your priest. Once your facilitated sessions have ended, the results of your Inventory will be destroyed by the priest preparing you for marriage. This reflects the fact that your responses capture a snapshot in time and you now have new or greater awareness of the topic areas. It also reflects that fact that the Inventory is a resource for use during marriage preparation and is not intended to be referenced at any point in time beyond the marriage preparation process.

All couples should receive a FOCCUS/REFOCCUS Certificate of Completion. Couples completing FOCCUS will receive FOCCUS for the Future as a take home resource. Additional resources may be made available to you during your facilitated sessions.

Step Four

Attend the Education Program(s) Chosen in Step Two

These include CEE, MAJ and Parenting/Step-Parenting

A Couple Certificate of Completion will be provided for your priest after you have attended CEE or MAJ.

Couples are reminded that full course NFP classes are offered through approved providers; Couple to Couple League and Fertility Care. Information on classes offered by these providers including fees is available at www.cclomaha.org and www.fertilitycare.org

Step Five

Wedding Rite

Planning for your wedding rite will begin after the previous four steps and any additional preparation required by your priest has taken place. The priest or deacon who will witness your marriage will meet with you to discuss the details particular to your ceremony. Policies for the Archdiocese of Omaha guide this process with each parish having corresponding and/or additional guidelines. For the specifics of planning, please refer to the Engaged Couple Guide for Catholic Marriage Preparation given to you at your first meeting at the parish.

After reading this information, you are invited to register for your required Marriage Preparation Program(s) using the links below noting that you will enter information for the Bride first and the Groom second during the registration process.

[Marriage a Journey for Life \(MAJ\)](#)

[Marriage a Journey for Life \(MAJ – V, Convalidation\)](#)

[Marriage a Journey for Life \(MAJ – R, Remarriage\)](#)

Parenting/Step-Parenting (*Family, Become What You Are*)

[October 26, 2013 Schuyler](#)

[August 29, 2013 St. Leo](#)

[November 16, 2013 St. Leo](#)

Catholic Engaged Encounter see Marriage Prep Brochure for details and contact marriageprep@archomaha.org

FOCCUS/REFOCCUS only – (You must contact the marriageprep@archomaha.org to choose this option.)

The most current information on marriage preparation, including Marriage Prep Brochures, is available on the Archdiocese of Omaha Marriage Prep Home page. www.archomaha.org