

DIOCESE OF COVINGTON MARRIAGE REQUIREMENTS

Office of Catechesis and Evangelization

DIOCESE OF COVINGTON 1125 Madison Ave., Covington, KY 41011

Table of Contents

Marriage Requirements for the Diocese of Covington	2
Marriage Prep Programs	3
Note for Marriage Prep Programs	6
General information on Natural Family Planning	7
Natural Family Planning Methods	8
Natural Family Planning Instructors	9
Convalidation	10
CATHOLIC MARRIAGE PREP.COM for Convalidation	12

Marriage Requirements for the Diocese of Covington

The Catholic Church and your diocesan community support couples to help them stay centered on Christ and form strong, lasting, sacramental marriages.

THREE REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL ENGAGED COUPLES WISHING TO MARRY IN THE DIOCESE OF COVINGTON:

1. Couples should contact a priest or deacon as soon as they decide they desire marriage. Please allow at least 6 - 9 months for marriage preparation.
2. Attend one of the listed marriage preparation programs at least six months prior to your wedding. Since marriage preparation programs often fill quickly, it is best to register two to three months before the program date. ****See course and registration information below.**
3. Attend a Natural Family Planning (NFP) course presented by a certified NFP instructor. It is preferable to attend this course after attending your marriage preparation program if possible. Natural Family Planning courses fill up quickly, so register early. ***Note: There may be situations, e.g. age, where attending an NFP course is not necessary.***
*****See instructors on consecutive pages.**

Marriage Preparation: <https://covdio.org/engaged/>

Natural Family Planning: <https://covdio.org/natural-family-planning/>

Marriage Prep Programs

Choose either Cincinnati-Covington Catholic Engaged Encounter or Living Marriage as a Sacrament

CINCINNATI-COVINGTON CATHOLIC ENGAGED ENCOUNTER

The weekend retreat offered by the Cincinnati-Covington Catholic Engaged Encounter (CEE) ministry offers couples a unique opportunity to look at their commitment to each other in a deeper way as they prepare for marriage. Away from the pressure and distractions of the outside world, couples are given 30 plus hours to honestly and intensively dialogue about their prospective lives together. Two married couples and a priest or deacon (if available) make up the presenting team. Presenting couples share brief stories about their marriages and the impact the sacrament of matrimony has had on their lives. The presenting team also offers couples ideas on how to continue to love each other, even amid the pressures of the world. The engaged couples should anticipate discussing each other's strengths and weaknesses, desires, and ambitions, as well as their attitudes about money, sex, children, family, and the role of the church and society in their future marriages. Finally, couples can go to confession and attend mass as a group on Sunday. Most people spend huge amounts of money and many months planning for their wedding. CEE is about preparing for what most hope will last 50 or 60 years — your marriage. **“A wedding is a day; a marriage is a lifetime.”**

Location:

Holy Spirit Center

5440 Moeller Ave

Cincinnati, Ohio 45212

To register, visit <https://cincinnati-covington.engagedencounter.com/>

For more information: e-mail the Cincinnati-Covington CEE Local Community at Cincinnati-Covington@engagedencounter.com or call Ashley Altenau at (513) 479-1700.

CEE hosts five weekends per year and has 14 team couples along with priests and deacons that volunteer their time to share the gift of marriage with engaged couples. They currently have two beautiful and Spirit-filled retreat centers – Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Center, Cincinnati, and Bergamo Retreat Center at 4400 Shakertown Rd., Beavercreek, OH 45430.

Overnight weekends begin Saturday promptly at 8:00 a.m. and end on Sunday at 2:00 p.m. While overnight weekends are preferable, there are in-parish weekends (no overnight stay)

that begin Saturday promptly at 8:00 a.m. and end at 9:00 p.m. They return Sunday, 8:15 a.m. and end by 3 p.m.

Financial assistance is available! Past participants have generously donated to help ensure that the weekend is available for all couples. Visit <https://cincinnati-covington.engagedencounter.com/reservations/>

LIVING MARRIAGE AS A SACRAMENT

Living Marriage as Sacrament (LMAS) is a Catholic program designed specifically for the Diocese of Covington. Over 3500 couples have been blessed by this program over the last 30 years! The program consists of 6 hours each day on two consecutive Saturdays (12 hours total) and is held at St. Barbara Church, Erlanger. Participation is limited to 25 couples per session.

You and your fiancé will hear real-world experiences and stories from team member presentations. You will also spend time in private conversations and small group discussions. The focus is on your relationship and the beauty and importance of the Sacrament of Matrimony.

What are the unspoken (and often subconscious) expectations, attitudes and perspectives you bring into your marriage? How can you communicate your thoughts and feelings with your spouse about difficult topics like finances, free time, traditions and family expectations? What is the plan God desires for your marriage and how does your sacrament impact the world? We will give you some practical tools — how to fight fairly and how to guard against the pressures you'll inevitably face — as well as some deeper thoughts about the beauty, sacredness and intimacy of marriage.

Our desire is that you come away with a better understanding of this beautiful sacrament and knowledge to help you build a loving marriage that is free, total, faithful, and fruitful — and rooted in Christ.

The classes are from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM on two consecutive Saturdays (must attend both weeks). The cost is \$125 per couple.

Please click on registration to see the available dates. Registrations are limited and fill up quickly, so sign up early! Dates for the upcoming year will be posted in late summer/early fall.

For more information or to register for Living Marriage as Sacrament, visit <https://marriagedoc.org/>

For any questions, contact register@marriagedoc.org

Location:
St. Barbara Church
4042 Turkeyfoot Road
Erlanger, KY 41018

Note for Marriage Prep Programs:

- **There are certain situations in which the Church believes engaged couples could benefit from more intensive preparation. These include pre-marital pregnancy and extreme youth (one or both partners aged 19 or under). In such cases contact your pastor or Catholic Charities (859-581-8974) for individualized pre-marital counseling.**
- **If you are divorced or widowed, discuss with your priest/deacon what preparation program would be best for you.**
- **Scholarships, based on need, are available for all programs. A letter of request and/or a financial aid application may be required.**

General information on Natural Family Planning

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is the general title for the scientific, natural, and moral methods of family planning that can help married couples either achieve or postpone pregnancies. NFP methods are based on the 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. Since the methods of NFP respect the love-giving and life-giving nature of the conjugal act, they support God's design for married love!

Engaged couples are required to select a method of NFP that works best for them and obtain a certificate from a certified instructor.

God's Plan for Human Sexuality

God designed marriage as an "intimate partnership of life and love" (see [Gaudium et spes](#), no. 48). In God's design, marriage is a unique union of one man with one woman "for the whole of life" (see Canon 1055, [The Code of Canon Law](#)). Marriage is oriented to the good of the spouses and to the creation and nurture of new human life (see [Gaudium et spes](#), no. 48). Making decisions therefore, about when and how many children to have in marriage is a sacred responsibility that God has entrusted to husband and wife. This is the foundation of what the Church calls, "Responsible Parenthood"—the call to discern God's will for your marriage while respecting His design for life and love.

The Catholic Church supports the methods of Natural Family Planning (NFP) because they respect God's design for married love. In fact, NFP represents the only authentic approach to family planning available to husbands and wives because these methods can be used to both attempt or space out pregnancy. For more information about NFP, call the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization at (859) 392-1500.

Natural Family Planning Methods

Cervical Fluid-only methods or ovulation methods are probably the most widely used. They work well for women who prefer to focus on one sign.

- **Billings Method**
- **Creighton Method**

Sympto-thermal methods chart multiple signs: typically, mucus, basal body temperature, and position of the cervix. These models work well for women who like the confirmation of more than one sign.

- **Sympto-thermal Method**

Sympto-hormonal methods detect the production of key fertility hormones with simple at-home urine tests and cross check it with mucus observations.

- **Boston Cross Check Method**
- **Marquette Method**

Natural Family Planning Instructors

Billings

- <https://billings.life/en/>

Boston Cross Check Method

- Jessica Grace, RN: (443) 824-8285 (text or call) – jessicagracefertility@gmail.com
- Heidi Schaap: (937) 768-0751 – hello@smallthingsfertility.com

Creighton Method

- Rita Johnson: +1 (517) 775-7229 – <https://naturalfertilitycare.org/>

Marquette Method

- Jenna Bernardo, RN: (513) 658-0444 – jennamarquettern@gmail.com

Website: <https://jenna-the-fertility-rn.square.site/>

- Angela Hobbs, BSN, RN, MMCP: (270) 735-3883 – angela@giftofyourfertility.com

Website: Gift of Your Fertility – <https://giftofyourfertility.com/>

Sympto-thermal Method

- Couple-to-Couple League **English instruction:** (513) 471-2000 – <https://ccli.org/>
- Couple-to-Couple League **Spanish instruction:**
Silvia Schmidt, CCL Teacher
(513) 471-2000, ext. 1031
(859) 380-2814 (cell)
sschmidt@ccli.org

(Please note: Ms. Schmidt **does not** have information regarding classes in English.)

Convalidation

"Convalidation is not simply a “blessing” of an existing union. It requires that a new, free act of consent be made." -United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)

What is a convalidation?

"The Catholic Church believes that marriages entered into by non-Catholics in their particular church, or wherever they may take place, are valid. In the eyes of the Church, even two atheists or agnostics who are married civilly before a judge or magistrate enter into a valid marriage.

Convalidation Requirements: Catholics, however, are bound to observe a certain form of marriage ritual in order that their marriage be valid. Canon law—the law of the Church—requires that Catholics enter into marriage by free mutual consent that is witnessed in a church by an authorized bishop, priest, or deacon and at least two other witnesses. Marriages in which one or both parties are Catholic and which are not witnessed by an authorized bishop, priest, or deacon, or which do not receive proper permission to take place in another forum, are considered invalid in the eyes of the Church.

It may be that the Catholic who entered into marriage outside the Church did not realize that these requirements existed, but more often, it is because one or both of the spouses was not free to marry in the Catholic Church because of a previous marriage or because they were awaiting a Declaration of Nullity. Also, the Catholic partner(s) may not have been active in the Church and did not consider having a Catholic wedding.

The Church very much wants to assist these couples who later want to enter into valid Catholic marriage, and it offers them pastoral and spiritual support as they need it. When these couples are ready and free to do so, they celebrate what is called a convalidation, from the Latin word meaning “to firm up” or “to strengthen.” This is sometimes wrongly referred to as the blessing of a marriage.

It is important to realize that a convalidation is not merely a renewal of promises made previously but is a new act of consent by each spouse.

This new act of consent is essential to marriage, and the words that the couple expresses are the outward sign of the gift of self that they exchange.

This convalidation of marriage may be celebrated within Mass or outside of Mass, again depending on the particular situation of the couple.

If both are Catholic, it is fitting that the convalidation be celebrated within Mass. If one spouse is not Catholic, it is preferable that it be celebrated outside of Mass." **Source:** Together For Life

Marriage preparation is also required for convalidation

A “convalidation” is not just the Church’s recognition of an existing situation, nor a blessing of an existing union. If both are baptized Christians,

Convalidation = Sacrament of Matrimony with all the same “obligations and benefits,” or “goods and requirements”.

“A convalidation is not simply a renewal of the previous intention to marry, but the creation of a valid marriage in the sight of the Christian community.” USCCB

Canon law requires proper preparation for entering the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Individual dioceses establish the guidelines for this preparation.

A civilly married couple needs to learn all that the Sacrament of Matrimony entails.

*Make sure to read “Convalidation: Bringing your Marriage into the Church (USCCB)”

<https://www.foryourmarriage.org/convalidation-bringing-your-marriage-into-the-church/>

CATHOLIC MARRIAGE PREP.COM for Convalidation

Since 2004, Catholic Marriage Prep has pioneered the way for Pre-Cana courses across the globe, developing the first-ever online, mentor-led, multilingual marriage preparation course.

Catholic Marriage Prep

This online marriage prep is built upon Saint John Paul II's Theology of the Body and provides personalized one-on-one mentoring from trained married couples. Couples are invited to a deeper relationship with each other and with Christ. Build a foundation for a strong, healthy, holy, and Christ-centered marriage.

The course is listed on the USCCB and Archdiocese of the Military websites. It is self-paced. As a couple, you can complete the course in as little as 4 weeks or spend up to 3 months preparing! Your instructor couple will follow your pace and accompany you every step of the way. The course is designed for ALL couples including couples separated by distance, not separated by distance, interfaith, civilly married (convalidation), and couples who desire to learn more about the sacrament of Matrimony! This online marriage prep is available in English, Spanish, and French.

Visit: <https://www.catholicmarriageprep.com/>

Cost:

\$239 per couple

(\$289 per couple for urgent matters/rush couples)

CONVALIDATION REGISTRATION <https://catholicmarriageprep.com/register>

After purchasing the course, you will be asked questions that will tailor the course especially for you. This is how the Marriage Prep course can serve our couples who are seeking a valid Catholic marriage.