

# Options for Forming Engaged Couples for Marriage Utilizing Trained Marriage Mentor Couples

## *Option 1: Trained Mentor Couple conducts FOCCUS inventory (Option recommended by Office for Evangelization and Family Life)*

*(Six meetings with Engaged Couple (2 with priest, 4 with Mentor Couple) unless remediation is necessary)*

*This suggested plan can be adapted by the priest as he wishes.*

### Meeting 1 with priest

- Initial meeting
- Paperwork
- Assessment of couple's catechetical status
  - o If remediation is deemed necessary, you may want to consider these resources:
    - Catholicism 101 video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ad1Vbj5-SD0&t=6s>
    - Catholic Essentials from Ave Maria Press: <https://www.avemariapress.com/product/1-59471-145-3/Catholic-Essentials-Student-Text/>

**Engaged couple should be encouraged to attend Engaged Encounter as early as possible in engagement, preferably before first meeting with Mentor Couple**

### Meeting 1 with Mentor Couple

- Get to know each other
- Catholic view of marriage
- Instructions on taking FOCCUS inventory

### Meeting 2 with Mentor Couple

- Love Languages
- Begin to review areas for discussion from FOCCUS Inventory

### Meeting 3 with Mentor Couple

- Praying as a couple
- Building a Catholic home
- Continue to review areas for discussion from FOCCUS Inventory

### Meeting 4 with Mentor Couple

- Contraception
- Wedding liturgy planning basics

Engaged Couple instructed to complete instruction on Natural Family Planning (online or in person program)

Marriage Mentor Couple shares notes from their meetings with the priest

### Meeting 2 with priest (Mentor Couple may attend if desired by priest)

- Liturgy planning

## Option 2: Priest conducts FOCCUS inventory

(Seven meetings with Engaged Couple (3 with priest, 4 with Mentor Couple) unless remediation is necessary)

*This suggested plan can be adapted by the priest as he wishes.*

### Meeting 1 with priest

- Initial meeting
- Paperwork
- Assessment of couple's catechetical status
  - o If remediation is deemed necessary, you may want to consider these resources:
    - Catholicism 101 video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ad1Vbj5-SD0&t=6s>
    - Catholic Essentials from Ave Maria Press: <https://www.avemariapress.com/product/1-59471-145-3/Catholic-Essentials-Student-Text/>
- Instructions on taking FOCCUS inventory
  - o The following should be communicated to the engaged couple:
    - You will receive an email from FOCCUS
    - Take the assessment separately
    - FOCCUS is an assessment, not a test – important to answer honestly
    - FOCCUS is a predictive tool to help begin important conversations
    - There will be 3 choices for each statement. As often as possible, answer agree or disagree, avoid answering “undecided” if possible

**Engaged couple should be encouraged to attend Engaged Encounter as early as possible in engagement, preferably before first meeting with Mentor Couple**

### Meeting 2 with priest

- Review FOCCUS Inventory with couple (additional meeting to review Inventory may be necessary)

### Meeting 1 with Mentor Couple

- Get to know each other
- Catholic view of marriage
- Love Languages

### Meeting 2 with Mentor Couple

- Building a Catholic Home
- Praying as a couple

### Meeting 3 with Mentor Couple

- Discuss items which priest deems necessary

### Meeting 4 with Mentor Couple

- Contraception
- Wedding liturgy planning basics

Engaged Couple instructed to complete instruction on Natural Family Planning (online or in person program)

Marriage Mentor Couple shares notes from their meetings with the priest

### Meeting 3 with priest (Mentor Couple may attend if desired by priest)

- Liturgy planning

## Mentor Couple Meetings with the Engaged Couple

Upon their engagement, the couple will first call the priest who they would like to witness their marriage. If the priest wishes to include a Marriage Mentor Couple in the couple's formation, he will either ask the engaged couple to choose a mentor couple from the OEFL website videos, or he will choose a particular couple himself. The priest will then call the Marriage Mentor Couple to determine if the MMC is able to help form this engaged couple.

If you and your spouse are able to join in the formation of this couple, ask these details of the priest before you set up your first meeting with the engaged couple:

- Names and contact information of the engaged couple
- The wedding date
- If and when the engaged couple plans to attend Engaged Encounter (If the couple plans to attend Engaged Encounter, they should attend the earliest possible session. If the couple will not attend EE for some reason, another option approved by the Office for Evangelization and Family Life will be utilized.)
- The priest's expectations are as to what material you should cover (he may choose to follow the suggested plan, or adapt it to the needs of the couple)
- Which of you will be facilitating the FOCCUS inventory (priest or MMC)
  - o If you are facilitating the FOCCUS inventory, ask the priest who you should contact at the parish (himself or perhaps the parish secretary) when it comes time to set up the inventory.
  - o If you are not facilitating the FOCCUS inventory, ascertain from the priest what material from the FOCCUS inventory he would like you to discuss in your sessions with the engaged couple.

After getting these details from the priest, call the engaged couple to set up your first meeting.

Plan to meet 4 times before the wedding (about once a month or so, depending on timeline and schedule allowances). If the couple does not attend Engaged Encounter, additional meetings may be needed. Meetings should last about 90 minutes (outside of coffee, dinner or other activity)

Outside of the sessions together, you may want to:

- Send them emails about activities that they may be interested in – especially activities at the parish
- Send the couple individual notes of encouragement.
- Talk to them when you see them at Mass. Introduce them to others!
- Ask a group from your parish to pray for the couple.
- Take a picture of the engaged couple at your first meeting and display it in your home as a reminder to pray for them each time you see it.

It's important to build a relationship with the engaged couple! Conversations should not be 'by appointment only'.

## Meeting 1 with Mentor Couple:

- Get to know each other
- Catholic view of marriage
- Instructions on taking FOCCUS inventory

Each session:

- Begin and end with prayer (Spontaneous, Hail Mary, or perhaps adaptation of a Catholic prayer for engaged couples such as [this one](#).)
- Be personal, honest and real – share your experiences, but know that every couple is unique
- Never be confrontational – meet them where they are.
- If the couple asks a question that you're not sure of the answer, thank them for the question and promise to have a good answer when they meet again. Call pastor or OEFL for answer.
- **Remember that you represent the Church. All of our words and actions should be in obedience with the Church.**

## Get to know each other

- When introducing the program, “we’re going to share with you what we get to do together to help you form an amazing marriage” – be upbeat, not focusing on ‘requirements’
- Get to know the couple personally. “How did you meet?”, “How long have you known each other?” Almost everyone enjoys sharing their love story and this is often a great way to help the engaged couple become more comfortable.
- Tell the couple why you chose to get involved with this program.
- Describe what the four of you will be doing over the next few months.
- Share your contact information.

## Catholic view of marriage

*Introduce this topic by sharing that the Catholic view of marriage is radically different from society's and that you are happy that the engaged couple has chosen to be counter-cultural with choosing a Catholic marriage. Explain that you will spend the next few minutes watching a video presenting the basics of the joyfilled, wonderful Catholic theology of marriage, and that you'll have a few minutes to discuss points from the video afterwards.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LI-QwyxVNuE&t=12s>

After video, begin the conversation with a simple lead-in such as, “Was there anything that particularly struck you from this video?”

As much as possible, emphasize these points:

1. God gave us marriage as a foretaste of heaven. Marriage is an icon of the Blessed Trinity.
2. Marriage is also an image of the relationship between Christ and His Church. This is pretty lofty stuff!
3. Thus, marriage is permanent since the love of the Trinity is permanent and the love of Christ for His Church is permanent.
4. Before the Fall our passions were always oriented toward the good; since the Fall they can be twisted. But even when twisted, at their core there is still a longing for the good.

5. Humans are the union of body and soul. We long to be seen in our totality and LOVED. This is also our ultimate destiny (heaven).
6. It is because of the permanence of marriage that we can reveal ourselves fully to our spouse.
7. Marriage is not 50/50. Each must give 100%
8. Ephesians 5 is the key to marriage. We each must put our spouse first and ourselves second.

*Share with a newly engaged couple a story that illustrates how you are subordinate to one another (as we discussed at Training #1 – Ephesians 5:21-33).*

(At the beginning of your Marriage Mentor ministry utilize the video on the Catholic View of Marriage. As you become more experienced, you may use the video as a guide for you and share the information with the engaged couple in your own words.)

### **Instructions on taking FOCCUS Inventory**

Explain to the couple what the FOCCUS Inventory is and why they are asked to take it. Let them know that the inventory will help lead them through conversations during the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting together.

The following should be communicated to the engaged couple:

- You will receive an email from FOCCUS
- Take the assessment separately
- FOCCUS is an assessment, not a test – important to answer honestly
- FOCCUS is a predictive tool to help begin important conversations
- There will be 3 choices for each statement. As often as possible, answer agree or disagree, avoid answering “undecided” if possible

### **Homework**

Ask the couple to complete the homework sheet (next page of this section) before Meeting 2.

### **After each session concludes and the couple has left:**

- Pray together, thanking God for the opportunity to share in this ministry. Ask God’s blessing on the Engaged Couple.
- Write down a brief recap of the night’s events. Since notes are not taken while the couple is present, it is helpful to jot down as much as you can remember of the important points shared. These notes may be used when preparing your final report for the priest. These notes are destroyed after you give your final report to the priest.

**The morning after your first meeting with your engaged couple, contact the parish and ask the administrator of the FOCCUS Inventory to set up their FOCCUS account.**

**After your first meeting with your engaged couple, contact OEFL ([oefl@mobarch.org](mailto:oefl@mobarch.org)) with the following information:**

- Bride & Groom's names
- Priest who is witnessing the sacrament

## Homework sheet for the Engaged Couple after Meeting 1:

### The Catholic View of Marriage:

Questions for couple to answer individually first then discuss:

Thinking of the TV shows which we watch... which ones show a husband and a wife who are both strong, intelligent characters who love and support each other in their mission of raising a family? Why do you think producers don't create more shows with characters like this?

When people see us out "in public", in what ways do we project an image of love, as Christ loves the Church?

- Name three ways that we project this image of love:
  
- Name three new things that we could begin doing (but don't already do) to project this image of love:
  
- Name three things that we may sometimes do that perhaps don't project this image (e.g., looking at the phone, etc.)

In what ways do we now live out Ephesians 5:21 (*Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ.*) as an engaged couple?

How does it make me feel to know that after we take our vows on our wedding day that my spouse will be with me "as long as we both shall live"?

## Meeting 2 with Mentor Couple:

- Love Languages
- FOCCUS Inventory Facilitation

Each session:

- Begin and end with prayer
- Be personal, honest and real – share your experiences, but know that every couple is unique
- Never be confrontational – meet them where they are.
- If the couple asks a question that you're not sure of the answer, thank them for the question and promise to have a good answer when they meet again. Call pastor or OEFL for answer.
- **Remember that you represent the Church. All of our words and actions should be in obedience with the Church.**

## Homework Recap

Talk over the homework sheet from Meeting 1 with the engaged couple. Share with them your own answer to the last question of the homework sheet.

## Love Languages

Explain that as we are to be subordinate to each other, we need to find ways to do this. Gary Chapman has written a number of books dealing with what he calls "Love Languages". In essence, his premise is that we all speak different love languages. Much like a spoken language, if two people don't speak the same love language, communication is difficult. We all have an emotional need for love throughout our lives and we need to learn how best to communicate love to our spouse. Chapman asserts that a couple experiences an "in-love" obsession that meets the emotional need for love but that phenomenon lasts only about 2 years. After that, couples descend from the clouds, and their eyes are opened so that they see the other person as they truly are, warts and all. He believes that at this point, the couple can pursue "real love" – a kind of love that unites reason and emotion, involving an act of will and requires discipline. In other words, we choose to love. His books are about meeting your spouse's deep emotional need to feel loved.

According to Chapman, there are five ways that individuals feel truly loved - five love languages if you may:

- Words of Affirmation
- Quality Time
- Receiving Gifts
- Acts of Service
- Physical Touch

It's important to understand the way that we best feel loved, and then be able to communicate that with our spouse.

*Give the engaged couple an overview of 'Love Languages'. Share with them your own journey past the "in-love obsession" as you discovered each other's primary language. Share with the couple your conscious choice to love each day.*

### **FOCCUS Inventory Facilitation**

In keeping with the training guidelines, begin facilitating the FOCCUS Assessment. Plan to cover about one half of the assessment during this session, but be flexible as to the needs of the couple.

Plan out in advance which topics you believe the couple needs to cover. Using the FOCCUS Manual, determine the best way to introduce the topics.

Remember, your goal is to help the couple learn how to discuss their differences. They do not need to agree on everything, rather they need to learn how to listen, share and respect the other's opinion.

Avoid the dynamic of the couple arguing their case to you. Help them to focus the conversation between each other.

Provide the couple with paper and pen to take notes. Based on the conversation during your facilitation of the assessment, assign topics for the couple to discuss after your time together.

### **After each session concludes and the couple has left:**

- Pray together, thanking God for the opportunity to share in this ministry. Ask God's blessing on the Engaged Couple.
- Write down a brief recap of the night's events. Since notes are not taken while the couple is present, it is helpful to jot down as much as you can remember of the important points shared. These notes may be used when preparing your final report for the priest. These notes are destroyed after you give your final report to the priest.

## Homework sheet for the Engaged Couple after Meeting 2:

### Love Languages

- Individually, take the Love Language assessment: [www.5lovelanguages.com/profile/couples/](http://www.5lovelanguages.com/profile/couples/)
- Before sharing the results of the assessment with each other, each individual should guess the other's primary love language.
- Share the results of each person's assessment with the other. Discuss the results. Do you agree or disagree with your own results? Why?
- Share with the other three specific actions within their primary love language that make them feel loved.

### FOCCUS Assessment continuing discussion

Continue to discuss the topics brought forth from the FOCCUS Assessment, especially those assigned by your Mentor Couple. If you have any specific questions or concerns, jot them down to bring up at the next meeting.

### **Meeting 3 with Mentor Couple:**

- Praying as a Couple
- Building a Catholic Home
- FOCCUS Inventory Facilitation

Each session:

- Begin and end with prayer
- Be personal, honest and real – share your experiences, but know that every couple is unique
- Never be confrontational – meet them where they are.
- If the couple asks a question that you're not sure of the answer, thank them for the question and promise to have a good answer when they meet again. Call pastor or OEFL for the answer.
- **Remember that you represent the Church. All of our words and actions should be in obedience with the Church.**

### **Homework Recap**

Ask the engaged couple if they were able to guess the “Love Language” of the other. Ask each to share the three specific actions within their primary love language that they asked from the other. Share what learning about Love Languages meant for your own marriage.

Ask the couple if they were able to continue the conversations started from last session's FOCCUS assessment topics. Inquire if the differences are being discussed and resolved effectively.

### **Praying as a Couple**

Talk personally to the couple about what praying as a couple has given the two of you, both as a couple and as an individual. Share with them your preferred ways to pray, and ways you hope to begin incorporating new prayer styles into your prayer life as a couple. Emphasize that prayer is one of those things that we can't just talk about, or admire in others, hoping to reap the benefits. To be people of prayer we must spend time in prayer, and that adequate time spent in prayer is essential.

Be very “hands-on” with your suggestions. Model what you actually do when you pray together. If you normally pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet via the “Laudate” app while holding hands, show them just how you do this.

(You may want to begin collecting app (or website) suggestions to share with the engaged couple. Talk with other Mentors to find out which apps they suggest. Remember, what ‘works’ for you as a couple may not ‘work’ for everyone – be ready to suggest a variety of ways to pray.)

### **Building a Catholic Home**

Share your story of “making a first home” with the engaged couple. Share how you chose furnishings and decorations, and why you chose to add the things that you did. Emphasize:

- A home reflects to those who visit what is important to those who live there.
- A home's furnishings and overall atmosphere remind those who live there what is important to the family.

Point out the items related to faith which are in your home today. Share why they are important to you.

Encourage the couple to have a crucifix in a prominent place near the entrance of their new home. If the couple does not yet have a crucifix, encourage them to ask for one as a wedding gift – perhaps from one of their Godparents!

### **FOCCUS Inventory Facilitation**

In keeping with the training guidelines, begin facilitating the FOCCUS Assessment. Plan to cover the remainder of the assessment during this session, but be flexible as to the needs of the couple.

Plan out in advance which topics you believe the couple needs to cover. Using the FOCCUS Manual, determine the best way to introduce the topics.

Remember, your goal is to help the couple learn how to discuss their differences. They do not need to agree on everything, rather they need to learn how to listen, share and respect the other's opinion.

Avoid the dynamic of the couple arguing their case to you. Help them to focus the conversation between each other.

Provide the couple with paper and pen to take notes. Based on the conversation during your facilitation of the assessment, assign topics for the couple to discuss after your time together.

### **Introduce this month's homework**

Share that this month's homework will have them discuss shared prayer and the new home together. Urge the couple to make the commitment to each other to begin praying regularly together.

Encourage the couple to continue the conversations begun from this session's FOCCUS Inventory.

Ask the couple to conscientiously watch the video concerning contraception assigned at the end of their homework sheet – limiting outside distractions so that they are able to give their full attention to the material. Set the stage by encouraging the couple to watch the video with an open mind. Introduce the topic by saying that the problem with contraception is that it blocks the couple's gift to one another. Contraception teaches us to withhold or deny the gift. Let the couple know that you will talk a bit further about this at the next session.

### **After each session concludes and the couple has left:**

- Pray together, thanking God for the opportunity to share in this ministry. Ask God's blessing on the Engaged Couple.
- Write down a brief recap of the night's events. Since notes are not taken while the couple is present, it is helpful to jot down as much as you can remember of the important points shared. These notes may be used when preparing your final report for the priest. These notes are destroyed after you give your final report to the priest.

## Homework sheet for the Engaged Couple after Meeting 3:

### Praying as a couple:

- Talk to each other about your favorite ways to pray – when you feel closest to Our Lord.
- Read these articles about prayer:
  - o Praying as a Couple by Simcha Fisher: [www.ncregister.com/blog/simcha-fisher/praying-as-a-couple](http://www.ncregister.com/blog/simcha-fisher/praying-as-a-couple)
  - o Ways to Pray as a Couple by Allison Auth : <http://www.catholicmarriageprep.com/blog/entry/ways-to-pray-as-a-couple>
  - o Beginning to Pray Together by David Stoop and Jan Stoop: [www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/growing-together-spiritually/spiritual-intimacy/beginning-to-pray-together](http://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/growing-together-spiritually/spiritual-intimacy/beginning-to-pray-together)
  - o How Do We Pray Together by David Stoop and Jan Stoop: [www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/growing-together-spiritually/spiritual-intimacy/how-do-we-pray-together](http://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/growing-together-spiritually/spiritual-intimacy/how-do-we-pray-together)
- Using the ideas that you gleaned from your Mentor Couple, the assigned reading or perhaps from another Catholic couple that you know, choose one or two ways to try out to pray together and make the commitment to pray together each day – either in person or, on those days you can't be together, Facetime!

### Building a Catholic home:

Discuss with your spouse:

- Do surroundings make a difference in the way people live their lives?

Read this article:

- 5 Ways to Keep a Catholic Home: [diocesan.com/5-ways-keep-catholic-home/](http://diocesan.com/5-ways-keep-catholic-home/)

Has your conversation with your Mentor Couple inspired you to intentionally add “Catholic” items your new home together? If so, what do you plan to do?

### FOCCUS Assessment continuing discussion

Continue to discuss the topics brought forth from the FOCCUS Assessment, especially those assigned by your Mentor Couple. If you have any specific questions or concerns, jot them down to bring up at the next meeting.

**Watch the video:** Be Prepared Video Series #14: Who Says Contraception is Wrong?

<https://youtu.be/etjgKx8SjNc>

(We will begin our Meeting 4 discussion with this video. Please make note of any questions you may have, and bring those questions with you to our next meeting.)

## Meeting 4 with Mentor Couple:

- Contraception
- Wedding liturgy planning basics

(Shortly before you meet with the couple for this session, watch again the video on contraception.)

Each session:

- Begin and end with prayer
- Be personal, honest and real – share your experiences, but know that every couple is unique
- Never be confrontational – meet them where they are.
- If the couple asks a question that you're not sure of the answer, thank them for the question and promise to have a good answer when they meet again. Call pastor or OEFL for answer.
- **Remember that you represent the Church. All of our words and actions should be in obedience with the Church.**

### Homework Recap

Ask the engaged couple to share their experience of praying with each other since the last meeting. Encourage the couple to keep up this habit in these days leading up to the wedding and especially beyond. Be ready to suggest other possible types/ways to pray.

Ask the engaged couple if they have made any decisions regarding the articles they will use to decorate their home.

Ask the couple if they were able to continue the conversations started from last session's FOCCUS assessment topics. Inquire if the differences are being discussed and resolved effectively.

### Contraception

Inquire as to the questions the couple has after watching "Who Says Contraception is Wrong?"

In your discussion with the couple, emphasize:

- The problem with contraception is that it blocks the gift – it teaches us to withhold or deny the gift of the other.
- Marriage is meant to be a total gift of the self to the other. We are not meant to place limits on such a gift.
- Love is meant to be full, free, faithful and fruitful.

If the couple has questions concerning the Church's teachings on contraception, encourage the couple to discuss this with their priest. Be sure to make note of their questions in the Summary Form which you will give to the priest after this session with the engaged couple.

## What Makes a Catholic Wedding Liturgy Different?

Archdiocesan Policies - Before this session, review Topic 10 of the [Marriage Preparation Policy](#) of the Archdiocese, "Posed Photographs at Weddings". Also, please note that our archdiocesan insurer has determined that it will not insure for unmanned aircraft on church property. This includes drones. For this reason, drones are not permitted on church property, including at weddings. You may want to caution the couple about these policies.

Review the online article from the USCCB, "[Ten Tips for Keeping Your Catholic Wedding Focused on Faith](#)" and share the tips in your own words.

Share with the couple the things that you did at your wedding that helped keep the focus on the sacrament that you were celebrating.

Ensure that the couple understand that –

- Marriage is a sacrament of the Church that the couple confers to each other. The priest is the official witness of the sacrament.
- The wedding ceremony is a liturgical rite of the Church. The couple will need to stay in the guidelines of the Church.
- The Rite itself is beautiful. Nothing needs to be added.
- The priest will help the couple understand what takes place during the Rite and why.
- All things during the liturgy, even the music, will have limits. The Music Director will help them choose what is and is not appropriate for the liturgy.
- All of this is not to say that a couple cannot add their own personal touches to their wedding celebration – however, some of these personal touches may be better employed at the reception.

Share these additional USCCB resources with the couple:

[Planning a Catholic Wedding](#)

[Suggested Wedding Readings with Commentaries](#)

[The Order of Celebrating Matrimony](#)

[Ecumenical and Interfaith Marriages](#) (if relevant)

### As you finish up this last session:

- Never tell the couple "Congratulations you are done!" (Marriage formation is an ongoing activity!)
- Thank the couple for their willingness to work to form a Catholic marriage. Let the couple know that you plan to stay in touch after they are married. Encourage the couple to be in touch in the months and years to come.
- Make solid plans to meet about a month after the wedding (set the date if you can) – ask the engaged couple to bring some of their wedding photos for you to see and to tell you about their big day. While you meet, talk about their 1<sup>st</sup> month together.
  - o At this 'one month' meeting, set another meeting for 6-9 months down the road

- Invite engaged couple to join you at a parish function within 6 months - while there, help them make connections with other parish family members.

### **After this session concludes and the couple has left:**

- Pray together, thanking God for the opportunity to share in this ministry. Ask God's blessing on the Engaged Couple.
- Write down a brief recap of the night's events. Use these and the notes you took after your other sessions together to help you fill out the "Pre-Marriage Facilitation Summary Form" which you will give to the witnessing priest. After you fill out the summary form and have reviewed your mentor sessions with the priest, destroy all of your notes.

### **After this session with the engaged couple:**

- Contact the priest to set up a meeting to review your mentor sessions
- Fill out and give to the priest the FOCCUS "Pre-Marriage Facilitation Summary Form"
- Return to the priest the FOCCUS Couple Report (no copies should ever be made of the report and this copy should be destroyed by the priest after his review).

#### **Homework sheet for the Engaged Couple after Meeting 4:**

Contact your priest to set up a time to discuss your wedding liturgy.

Before you meet with the priest, read the articles about planning a wedding liturgy which your Mentor Couple shared with you.

Continue the discussions which have come forth from your meetings with your Mentor Couple.

## Resources you may want to use in conjunction with the FOCCUS Inventory discussion:

### Financial Pressures and Decision Making –

*Share a little about your own marriage, and how you have experienced the ups and downs in your finances, but how with the proper planning, you have been able to keep money as much a non-issue as possible. Explain how finances might have contributed to your own difficulties and the steps you took to deal with them.*

Potential Topics to Discuss:

- Who will pay the bills?
- How will checking accounts be handled? (Joint or separate? Whose bank will be used?)
- Will your income be combined or separate?

*Share with the couple how your marriage has changed financially, and how you have had to change with the situation. Share with the couple how you periodically discuss finances.*

- Will both of you continue to work and for how long?
  - o Before or after having children
  - o One or both of you changing jobs or going back to school
  - o Relocating to another city or state

*Share your work and life experiences which may have ranged from both working for major corporations, to starting your own business, to one of you dropping down to part-time status, to only one of you working. Share how each transition changes your financial plans and your lifestyle.*

- How much can one spouse spend without consulting the other?

*Share examples from your own marriage. This is the point where the topic of hobbies comes up (e.g. golf, hunting, fishing tennis, shopping, etc.) Suggest to the couple that this can be addressed in the couple's monthly budget.*

- How will holidays and birthdays be handled?

*Share with the couple how you handle gifts for each other and for your family members. This can be an adjustment for a newly married couple based on expectations from childhood.*

- What is your plan regarding housing?

*This is when the couple will talk about issues of: purchase or rent (and for how long), home size, new or old, part of town, cost, furniture. Ask them to share specifics about how they plan to reach their goals.*

- Would the couple turn to family or other sources for financial assistance?

- What are their thoughts regarding childcare and schooling if their marriage is blessed with children?

### Budgeting

Priorities –

*Share with the couple examples of the priorities you had when drawing up a budget:*

Maintaining good health insurance, renters insurance and life insurance

Giving money and time to the Church  
Continuing to “date” each other in your married relationship  
Traveling  
Savings  
Maintaining as much of a debt free life as possible (planning purchases to avoid charging)  
Hobbies  
Charities and Organizations you want to support

#### Short-Term Goals

*Share with the couple some of your short term goals:*

Savings goals for the year  
Small purchases for the home (sound system, couch, etc.)  
Vacation  
Entertainment (dining, movies, etc.)  
An on-going “wish list”

#### Long-Term Goals

*Share with the couple the long term goals you set early in your marriage and the discussions that went into setting these types of long-term goals*

Changing to a particular profession or job  
Location of residence  
Buying a home  
Education

You may want to encourage the couple to utilize the resources from [Compass Catholic Ministries](#). Many of the items in the “Resources” tab are free!

#### **Pornography**

If you believe that pornography may be a stumbling block for either of the individuals, please let the witnessing priest know your impression as soon as possible. You may want to suggest the site, [Integrity Restored](#), to either individual. Integrity Restored has resources for individuals who access pornography as well as their betrothed.

#### **Communication Skills –**

A lot of growth takes place in the first few years on marriage – especially when it comes to communication. Marriage brings a whole new dimension to communication that you never experienced

as a single person. You will make a lot of mistakes along the way, but when we keep in mind the need to subordinate yourself to your spouse, the Holy Spirit will guide your words and actions.

*Share with the engaged couple a story from your early marriage as you learned to communicate as a married couple.*

Remind the couple that God indeed made us differently, and we need to understand and appreciate the differences between us. In general:

Men love to share facts; women share feelings

Men connect by doing things; women connect by talking

Men tend to think of one thing at a time and can even “blank-out” for periods of time; women can think of many things at once and shift subjects on a moment’s notice.

Women think of intimacy as talking and touching; men think of intimacy in physical terms.

*Share with the engaged couple a story illustrating how the two of you realized that you had different styles of communication.*