



ARCHDIOCESE OF  
CINCINNATI

# Guidelines for the Marriage Catechumenate

EFFECTIVE

**JANUARY 1, 2024**

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**DECEMBER 31, 2023**

*Feast of the Holy Family*

Dear Priests, Deacons and Lay Marriage Evangelists,

On the great feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I am pleased to promulgate the *Guidelines for the Marriage Catechumenate*. This document is a response to Pope Francis' request that every diocese implement "a true catechumenate" that forms and accompanies couples during the "time of preparation for marriage, its celebration, and the years immediately thereafter" (Preface, *Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life*).

The *Guidelines for the Marriage Catechumenate* are a tool to assist parishes in implementing the Holy See's new *Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life*. These do not represent an extra set of arbitrary requirements to overly burden a couple discerning the Sacrament of Marriage. Rather, they are meant to set a framework for how a parish community should offer support, formation, and calm discernment for every couple that approaches them seeking to receive the Sacrament of Marriage.

Please consider offering the full breadth of the Marriage Catechumenate process for each couple discerning the Sacrament of Marriage, regardless of whether each couple takes advantage of the fullness of that offer. In other words, the responsibility for pastoral implementation of these *Guidelines* rests with the parish and should not be seen as unbending requirements which must be fulfilled in each and every case for a couple to "earn" the sacrament.

The Sacrament of Marriage is a significant opportunity to accompany couples in the process of evangelization and discipleship. The goal is to welcome couples and offer them loving and individualized formation so they may become missionary disciples of Jesus Christ. This journey of accompaniment should begin the moment couples call the parish to request the Sacrament of Marriage and last at least through their fifth year of married life.

Enclosed you will find the following useful resources to help your parish launch the Marriage Catechumenate: the *Guidelines for the Marriage Catechumenate*, Recommended Parish Timeline, Frequently Asked Questions, and an Optional Spiritual Opportunity. The archdiocesan Marriage & Family Evangelization team is eager to help with your implementation.

In 2001, Pope St. John Paul II described the marriage of a twentieth century Italian couple, Blessed Luigi and Maria Beltrame Quattrocchi, as “ordinary life [lived] in an extraordinary way.” Theirs was a wonderful witness to the truth and beauty of the Sacrament of Marriage. May Blessed Luigi and Maria Beltrame Quattrocchi intercede on behalf of our archdiocese in the fruitful renewal of the Sacrament of Marriage and family life!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Dennis M. Schnurr". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small cross symbol above the first 'D'.

Most Reverend Dennis M. Schnurr  
Archbishop of Cincinnati



*Blessed Luigi and Maria Beltrame Quattrocchi*

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# Guidelines for the Marriage Catechumenate

## INTRODUCTION

Marriage preparation offers a unique opportunity to form and accompany couples in the process of evangelization and discipleship. The Marriage Catechumenate aims to “let the mystery of sacramental grace resonate among the spouses...[and to] bring to life the presence of Christ in them and among them” by emphasizing “faith formation and accompaniment toward the acquisition of a Christian lifestyle... in relation to the celebration of marriage...” (*Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life*, henceforth CPML, 5) The Marriage Catechumenate is “pedagogical, gradual, and ritualized...” (CPML, 5). It emphasizes formation over several years, an approach in which sacramentally married mentor couples accompany engaged and newly married couples in the journey toward missionary discipleship.

Pope Francis has asked every diocese in the world to implement “a true catechumenate for future spouses including all the steps of the sacramental path: time of preparation for marriage, its celebration, and the years immediately thereafter...” (CPML, Preface). In response to the Holy Father’s call to serve engaged and newlywed couples more fruitfully, the Archdiocese of Cincinnati would like to provide new **Guidelines for the Marriage Catechumenate** to assist parishes.

## IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

The implementation of the Guidelines begins in Beacons of Light Phase 2 and asks that pastors identify a Marriage & Family Coordinator (actual title may vary), ideally a member of the Evangelization team. The Marriage & Family Coordinator would not have to be a separate staff member; marriage and family evangelization could be included as part of the job responsibilities of a current role in Adult Faith Formation. Engaged couples in marriage preparation will not be bound by the changes in the Guidelines until after the Marriage & Family Coordinator has been trained. Staff from the Archdiocese of Cincinnati Marriage & Family Evangelization team are available to assist parishes in the formation and ongoing support of parish Marriage & Family Coordinators.

## KEY PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE MARRIAGE CATECHUMENATE

Engaged/Newlywed Couple

Pastor and parish priests

Deacon(s)

Marriage & Family Coordinator

Mentor Couple

Natural Family Planning promoters and/or NFP Instructor(s)

Liturgy Coordinator

Administrative Staff



## STAGES OF THE MARRIAGE CATECHUMENATE

The elements of the **Guidelines for the Marriage Catechumenate** are listed below, which reflect the terminology in the *Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life*. See Appendices 1 through 3 for more detailed information.

### STAGE 1 - PROXIMATE PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE (*optimally one year*)

The timeline for Stage 1 should maintain the integrity of the call for a calm discernment of the readiness of each engaged couple. Stage one includes four components and an optional rite.

1. Prenuptial investigation (M-1 form) to assess if the couple is free to marry. Download the M-1 Form (and all other necessary canonical paperwork) directly from the Chancellor's Resource Page ([resources.catholicaoc.org/offices/chancellor#90-116-prenuptial-file-forms-english-1589561555](https://resources.catholicaoc.org/offices/chancellor#90-116-prenuptial-file-forms-english-1589561555))
2. Parish-based Pre-Cana: formation in mentorship-based discipleship. Examples include Fully Engaged (*Totalmente Comprometidos*) and Witness to Love (*Testimonio de Amor*). FOCCUS may be used in combination with Witness to Love, but it is recommended not to be used alone.
3. Pre-Cana retreat approved by the Archdiocese. In English, this includes several options – Genesis: Pre-Cana Retreat, Three to Get Married, or Catholic Engaged Encounter. In Spanish, this includes only the *Génesis: Retiro de Preparación Matrimonial*, as no other options exist. The retreat includes teaching on the Sacrament of Marriage and is evangelistic/kerygmatic.
4. Chastity instruction. This includes teaching on conjugal chastity and fertility awareness. A full Natural Family Planning course in an approved method fulfills the chastity instruction.

Optional: *The Order of Blessing an Engaged Couple* – to be done at the parish or led by the parents and done in the home; it must be outside of the context of Mass. From the 2016 Roman Ritual “The Order of Celebrating Matrimony” or approved adaptation.

### STAGE 2 - IMMEDIATE PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE (*approximately two months*)

During this stage the couple meets with the priest or deacon at their parish to ensure knowledge of the goods of marriage and plan the logistics of their wedding liturgy. The reception of the Sacrament of Marriage is the conclusion of Stage 2 of the Marriage Catechumenate.

Optional: Parish-based opportunity for reflection for the engaged couple prior to the wedding day. It could take place prior to the wedding rehearsal and includes a refresher on the goods of marriage, plus the opportunity for the engaged couple to attend adoration and the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.

### STAGE 3 - ACCOMPANIMENT DURING THE FIRST SEVERAL YEARS OF MARRIED LIFE (*optimally five years*)

During this stage, the newly married couple is accompanied by their mentor couple. *Be Light!* by Witness to Love is one initiative that fulfills this. *Be Light!* provides content for marriage enrichment during each of the first five years of married life. Parishes can collaborate with the Marriage & Family Evangelization team to host *Nazareth Newlywed Outreach*, which is a new initiative that provides formation in a workshop/retreat setting for newlywed couples in their first five years of marriage.



PHASE	PRE-CATECHUMENAL	TRANSITIONAL	CATECHUMENAL			MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT & CRISIS SUPPORT
STAGE	Foundational	Welcoming of Couples	Stage 1: Proximate	Stage 2: Immediate	Stage 3: Accompaniment	Ongoing
TIMEFRAME	Childhood	13 months before	12 months before	1-2 months before	First 5 years	Anytime
PARALLEL TO RCIA	Period of evangelization & Pre-Catechumenate	Rite of Acceptance	Period of the Catechumenate; ends with Rite of Election	Period of Purification and Enlightenment; ends with Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation	Period of Mystagogy	
OCCASION	Discernment	Discerning marriage or engagement	Engagement	Matrimony	Parenting	Care
PURPOSE	Establish a solid foundation for a future vocation and discipleship [27]	Achieve a personalized and evangelistic encounter with the candidates [38]	Initiate couples into the Sacrament of Marriage [48]	Ratify freedom, conscience and sacredness of Marriage [57]	Effectively accompany the first years of married life [74]	Prevent crisis from becoming unsalvageable [87]
CONTENT	Self-esteem, respect [36] Baptismal vocation [36] Christian anthropology [36] Catholic Tradition + Virtues + Human development + Affectivity + Sexuality +	Proclamation of the kerygma [38] Dimensions of couple's love [39] Journey of conversion [42] Expectations [45] Ecumenical, interfaith [46] Discernment +	Sacraments, Marriage [63] Mercy [50] Couple Relationship [63] Psy, affective shortcomings [63] Conjugal sexuality [53] Continue more decisively [63] Prayer life [49] Communication + Finances +	Doctrinal, moral, Sacrament of Marriage [73] Prep liturgy of matrimony [73]	Marriage mystagogy [77] Healthy relationships [85] Sexuality in married life [85] Transmission of life [85] Parenting [85] First-born [90] Child-rearing [90] Will to defend marriage [85] Participation in mission [85] Reconciliation-Forgiveness + Infertility and miscarriage +	Violence [93] Empty-nesting [90] Divorced or Separated [94] Death of family member or spouse + Mental illness + Support for family members re: child with gender confusion or same-sex attraction +
SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE	Kerygmatic retreat for youth + Accompaniment/mentorship of youth	Conversion and discern vocation	Discern vocation	Couple's encounter with Christ [73]	Renewal of grace [85]	Redemptive Suffering +
rites	Sacramental - intersection of Confirmation with gifts of the HS as embodied persons Reintroduce youth evangelists to TOB & how they are to introduce it to youth	Entrance to the Marriage Catechumenate	The Order of Blessing an Engaged Couple	Liturgy of Matrimony	Milestone blessing +	Milestone blessing/ Anniversary certificate +
ACTIVITIES	Youth 2000 Retreat + Youth Group + Chastity education + The Gift of Fertility +	Young Adult Small Groups + Behold + Alpha (or similar) + Fertility Awareness for single women +	Genesis +* (or Three to Get Married or CEE) Natural Family Planning course +*	Opportunity for spiritual reflection +	Be Light + NFP Refresher course + Nazareth Newlywed Outreach + St. Gerard Mass of Hope for the Blessing of Children +	Ruah Woods Referral (or similar) + Golden Jubilee Wedding Anniversary Mass + Safe Haven Sunday

[#] Indicate CPML paragraph number

+ Indicate new element based on parish and archdiocesan experience and perspective

\* In collaboration with the Hispanic Evangelization Team

Purple - Marriage and Family Evangelization Team

Pink - In collaboration with AOC Catholic Schools Office

Yellow - In collaboration with Parish Evangelization Team

Blue - In collaboration with Young Adult and College Evangelization Team

## APPENDIX 1

# Recommended Marriage Catechumenate Timeline

## WELCOMING OF COUPLES

**Month 1 - Several meetings at the parish, including an optional Rite of Entrance to the Marriage Catechumenate**

### FIRST MEETING

- Welcoming and evangelizing
- Can be done by the parish Marriage & Family Coordinator
- Focus on getting to know the couple; learn if both are Catholic or not
- Ask why the couple wants to receive the Sacrament of Marriage, where they are in their spiritual life (assess readiness to enter the Marriage Catechumenate; information is available in the *Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life* numbers 37-47)
- No wedding date for the sacrament should be set at this meeting
- Homework: ask the couple to reflect on why they want to marry in the Church, and for each of them to answer questions (taken from the “Spiritual Assessment” section of the Couple’s Insert) and bring their written answers with them to the next meeting
- Set a date to meet again within a week or two

### SECOND MEETING

- Welcoming and evangelizing
- Read through the couple’s answers to the “Spiritual Assessment” questions
- Focus on marriage as a gift and offer of God’s grace, not an obligation
- Proclaim the Kerygma. Suggested resources for parish leaders to learn how to evangelize effectively: *The Contagious Catholic* by Michael LeJune (especially Chapter 6), *The How-To Book of Evangelization*, by Jen Fitz, and *101 Ways to Evangelize*, by Susan Windley-Daoust. There is also an online course by St. Paul Street Evangelization “Introduction to Evangelization” [evangelizationschool.com/spse-courses/introduction-to-evangelization-video-series/](https://evangelizationschool.com/spse-courses/introduction-to-evangelization-video-series/)
- Based on the openness of the couple’s reception to all of what has been shared, set a date to meet again in a few weeks

Optional: End with a simple Rite of Entrance into the Marriage Catechumenate. Can be a prayer for the couple, with a gift such as a bible or book about the Sacrament of Marriage such as *Three to Get Married* by Fulton Sheen.

## STAGE 1: PROXIMATE PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

### Month 2 - Discerning impediments and taking inventory

#### THIRD MEETING

- Informal assessment of impediments to marry in the Church. Ask birthdays, baptismal status, and basic canonical questions. This meeting should ascertain if either the woman or the man has a significant impediment, such as a prior bond, or sacred orders, a perpetual vow of chastity, consanguinity, affinity, impotence.
- If the couple does not have any of the major impediments stated above, discuss how their parish provides accompaniment. If the parish uses Fully Engaged, the engaged couple will be paired up with a mentor couple. If the parish uses Witness to Love, the engaged couple will be able to choose their own mentor couple throughout the rest of their marriage preparation
- Tell the engaged couple that the whole process takes about a year

#### FOURTH MEETING

- If the parish is using FOCCUS or Fully Engaged, meet with the couple to instruct them in the pre-marital inventory questionnaire, and give them time to complete it at home.
- If the parish is just using Witness to Love (without a pre-marital inventory), use this as the first meeting with the engaged couple's chosen mentor couple
- The engaged couple should contact the parish to set a wedding date

### Months 3-6 - Emphasis on human formation, evangelization & catechesis, discipleship

- If using FOCCUS or Fully Engaged, meet with the couple to go over their results from the inventory questionnaire
- If the parish is using Witness to Love, make sure the engaged couple has set up series of dates/times to meet with their mentor couple; Witness to Love parish facilitator should keep track of the engaged couple's schedule and check in to make sure they are meeting with their mentor couple
- For parishes using Fully Engaged, continue meeting with mentor couple
- Support honesty and the possibility of the couple's decision not to marry
- Pre-Cana Retreat: engaged couple to attend a *Genesis: Pre-Cana Retreat* or approved alternative

**Months 7-10 - Emphasis on catechesis on the virtue of marital chastity, culminating in optional “Order of Blessing an Engaged Couple”**

- Continue meeting with mentor couple; support honesty and the possibility of the couple’s decision not to marry
- Chastity formation: engaged couple to attend a Natural Family Planning course. It takes about 10 weeks to learn how to observe the signs of fertility and learn how to chart accurately
- By the end of this time, the mentor couple should provide input to the person at the parish in charge of filling out the M-1 Form so that the “Personal Assessment” part can be completed

Optional: At the end of this stage of preparation, offer “The Order of Blessing an Engaged Couple” at the parish (outside of a Mass; poses no canonical obligation to marry) or an approved adaptation.

**STAGE 2: IMMEDIATE PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE**

**Months 11 and 12 - Emphasis on catechesis on the Sacrament of Marriage and the logistics of preparing for the wedding liturgy; stage 2 ends with the wedding day.**

- Meet with the priest who will celebrate the wedding liturgy to discuss reading choices, other logistics for the wedding liturgy
- The priest should recap the goods of marriage and ensure the couple is fully catechized and able to intend what the Church intends to receive the Sacrament of Marriage
- Once the priest is certain of this, he should complete the “Canonical Assessment” portion of the M-1 form and ask the bride and groom to sign their agreement (currently pg. 5 of the M-1 form), including any additional signature if couple is requesting Permission for Mixed Religion (currently pg. 6 of the M-1 form)

Optional: Spiritual Opportunity. The engaged couple may attend a spiritual opportunity before their wedding day; it could take place the same day as their wedding rehearsal or the week prior. This should take place at the parish where they will marry, and focuses on offering the couple the chance to go to Confession and review the meaning of the Sacrament of Marriage. It is also an opportunity to offer the couple time to pray together, and could include adoration. See Appendix 3.

**Reception of the Sacrament of Marriage - Wedding Day**

## STAGE 3: ACCOMPANIMENT DURING THE FIRST SEVERAL YEARS OF MARRIED LIFE

- A five year time period of accompaniment is recommended
- Opportunity for newlywed outreach: ongoing accompaniment by the mentor couple, small group gatherings in home of host couple, date nights and parish or regional events
- Optional: Wedding photo shared in parish bulletin and/or newly married couple is announced at the end of a Sunday Mass
- Optional: married couples in their first five years of married life are invited to attend events for married couples. Examples include *Nazareth: Ordinary Life with Extraordinary Love*, offered by Marriage & Family Evangelization in collaboration with parishes, *Eucharistic Marriage*, offered by Greg Schutte, and *Nazareth Revisited*, offered by Dr. Brad Bursa and Scott Borchers
- Optional: For parishes using Witness to Love, *Be Light!* is a continuation with content and themes for the first five years of married life. The following concepts are drawn from *Be Light!*

### MARRIED YEAR 1

- *Belong*: The newly married couple feels welcomed at the parish and invited into a small group of other married couples; focus on human formation (5 Love Languages, etc.)

### MARRIED YEAR 2

- *Believe*: Kerygma and basic catechesis on the Sacrament of Marriage

### MARRIED YEAR 3

- *Becoming*: Conversion, prayer, healing and forgiveness

### MARRIED YEAR 4

- *Beatitude*: Life in Christ; living the moral teachings of the Church

### MARRIED YEAR 5

- *Be Light*: To become evangelizing spouses, sharing the gift of the Sacrament of Marriage with others

For more information, contact Adriana Vásquez, Managing Director of Marriage & Family Evangelization at [avasquez@catholicaoc.org](mailto:avasquez@catholicaoc.org) or 513-263-6648.

[centerforthenewevangelization.org/marriage-family](http://centerforthenewevangelization.org/marriage-family)

## APPENDIX 2

# Frequently Asked Questions About the Marriage Catechumenate

### 1. Is the Marriage Catechumenate a new program or set of classes?

No, the Marriage Catechumenate is not a new program or set of classes. It is not intended to be a sacramental preparation approach that relies on the model of weekly or bi-weekly classes.

### 2. If the Marriage Catechumenate is not a new program, then what is it?

The Marriage Catechumenate is a new approach for the evangelization and discipleship of couples during marriage preparation and in the first several years of married life. The goal is to form and accompany couples on their faith journey that leads to missionary discipleship.

This approach emphasizes the continuity of formation beyond the wedding day, as highlighted by the title of the Vatican document that provides the guidelines for dioceses, *Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life*. Read the full document online here ([laityfamilylife.va/content/dam/laityfamilylife/amoris-laetitia/OrientamentiCatecumenatomatrimoniale/Catechumenal%20Pathways\\_ENG.pdf](https://laityfamilylife.va/content/dam/laityfamilylife/amoris-laetitia/OrientamentiCatecumenatomatrimoniale/Catechumenal%20Pathways_ENG.pdf)). A hard copy will be provided to all Families of Parishes.

### 3. Has the Archbishop approved the Marriage Catechumenate, and will there be new guidelines?

Yes, the Archbishop has approved the implementation of the Marriage Catechumenate, and provided a letter to be shared with Families of Parishes. There are new Guidelines for the Marriage Catechumenate available to assist parishes in the implementation process, plus supporting documents: Chart of Sages, Recommended Parish Timeline, Frequently Asked Questions, and Spiritual Opportunity.

### 4. Is marriage preparation now going to be a full year?

Although remote marriage preparation begins in childhood, the optimal time for proximate and immediate preparation is now one year; however, there is flexibility within this so that the timeline of each engaged couple can be determined on a case by case basis, while still maintaining the integrity of the call for a calm discernment of the readiness of each engaged couple.

Parishes are encouraged to revise their marriage preparation policy by removing language about contacting the parish “a minimum of six months before their wedding date” and instead encourage couples to contact the parish as soon as they become engaged or plan to become engaged, and before they book a reception venue.

### 5. What if the engaged couple is already evangelized?

Each engaged couple should experience a calm discernment, regardless of their maturity in the faith journey. Spiritually mature engaged couples should still receive mentorship and accompaniment, not overlooking areas of human formation. Just as mentioned in the previous response, there is flexibility in determining the timeline of each engaged couple.

**6. When will implementation of the Marriage Catechumenate occur in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati?**

Implementation will begin during Phase 2 of Beacons of Light. The first step is for parish families to identify a member of the Evangelization Team to facilitate the implementation of the Marriage Catechumenate. It can be part of the job description of the Adult Evangelization employee, or it can be a stand-alone role at a parish.

**7. Does the implementation mean that pastors have another job to do during Beacons of Light?**

The end goal is a team approach at each parish, in which a Marriage & Family Coordinator oversees the Marriage Catechumenate and collaborates with priests, deacons, volunteer mentor couples, etc. to implement the Marriage Catechumenate.

Pastors are asked to think about who on their staff can take on the primary duty or oversight of the implementation of the Marriage Catechumenate. This should be done during Phase 2 of Beacons of Light, as the Evangelization Team is being formed. Once this decision has been made, the new Marriage & Family Coordinator will oversee the day-to-day implementation of the Marriage Catechumenate. The dedicated staff team member can be trained and mentored by the Archdiocese Marriage & Family Evangelization team.

**8. Is there a job description for a parish Marriage & Family Coordinator?**

Yes, and it is available online ([centerforthenewevangelization.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Assoc.-Director-of-Marriage-and-Family-Evangelization-Job-Description-FINAL.pdf](https://centerforthenewevangelization.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Assoc.-Director-of-Marriage-and-Family-Evangelization-Job-Description-FINAL.pdf)) or by contacting the Marriage & Family Evangelization team at 513-263-6648.

**9. Will there be training for parish Marriage & Family Coordinators?**

Yes, the Marriage & Family Evangelization team provided training in October 2023, and future training sessions will be offered as needed. Video recordings of the 2023 training will be available through the Marriage & Family Evangelization team. Further, parish Marriage & Family Coordinators will have the opportunity for coaching by the Marriage & Family Evangelization team.

**10. Are there approved parish-based marriage preparation mentorship resources available for parishes to use?**

Yes. All of the approved resources are available on our website: [centerforthenewevangelization.org/marriage-family/resources](https://centerforthenewevangelization.org/marriage-family/resources). Detailed information about these resources can be obtained by contacting the Associate Director of Marriage Preparation, Katie Englefield at [kenglefield@catholicaoc.org](mailto:kenglefield@catholicaoc.org).

**11. Will there be fewer couples who receive the Sacrament of Marriage because of the implementation of the Marriage Catechumenate?**

While no one can predict the future, the trend in the past few decades has shown a steady decline in couples marrying in the Church. Our response is to provide a new way to reach couples in a welcoming and personal way, avoiding a purely “checklist” mentality.

A team of clergy, parish staff, and a mentor couple share in the responsibility of helping the engaged couple discern if they truly intend what the Church intends. Even if a couple is imperfectly disposed, they may receive the Sacrament of Marriage.

As we read in *Catechetical Pathways for Married Life*: “[I]t is important that candidates manifest an inner readiness to embark upon a journey of faith-conversion as part of the marriage catechumenate...[L]arge numbers of baptized people who ask to marry in the Church do so without a mature experience of faith and ecclesial involvement calls for a pastoral attitude which offers them greater attention than has so far been afforded. Every care must be taken to embrace these situations with the correct attitude. Superficial and hasty solutions should be avoided, and ministers should instead view these cases as precious opportunities for proclamation and closeness to our brothers and sisters who are ‘young in the faith’” (CPML, 42-43).

**12. What if a parish or a location within a Family of Parishes has very few weddings per year, or is simply a “destination” parish/location for weddings? Does that parish/location still have to provide mentor couples and the entire Marriage Catechumenate?**

Every couple preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage should receive attentive care and attention. Even if there are just five couples marrying in a parish each year, forming these couples as they grow to become missionary disciples is a privilege and will bear fruit for the parish in years to come.

All Families of Parishes may opt to use *Witness to Love*, a marriage preparation mentorship model. *Witness to Love* relies on the bond of friendship between an engaged couple and a sacramentally married couple and allows the engaged couple to choose their mentor couple. This is helpful in situations where parishes may not be able to form and train a team of mentor couples.

As Beacons of Light continues, there will be the opportunity for collaboration among parishes or locations within the same Family of Parishes. For this reason, it is strongly recommended that each Family of Parishes identify a suitable point person to facilitate the Marriage Catechumenate. This point person will ensure that the Marriage Catechumenate is provided for couples who contact any of the parishes or locations within the Family of Parishes.

The Vatican has asked all (arch)dioceses to implement the Marriage Catechumenate, so even if a couple is being prepared for the Sacrament of Marriage in a different (arch)diocese, there will be some overlap in the process. Resources will become available to assist with communication about the Archdiocese of Cincinnati’s Guidelines for couples marrying in an AOC parish but being prepared outside the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.



## APPENDIX 3

# Optional Spiritual Opportunity at Parishes\*

This is an optional Spiritual Opportunity that could take place at parishes during the end of Stage 2 of the Marriage Catechumenate with the option of doing it for more than one engaged couple marrying around the same day. Possible dates: the morning of the rehearsal at the church, or in the week or two prior to the wedding day.

**8:00/8:30 AM** – Mass

**9:00 AM** – Light breakfast

**9:20 AM** – Opening prayer, welcome, introductions

**9:30 AM** – BELOVED Episode 5: *A Sacramental Bond* followed by group discussion

**10:30 AM** – Decade of Rosary, 2<sup>nd</sup> Luminous Mystery (ideally at a statue of Mary in the church or side chapel; possibly an outdoor location such as a Marian grotto)

**11:00 AM** – Holy Hour in the main church or side chapel with the option of adoration and benediction. Confessions available throughout the Holy Hour.

**12:00 PM** – Optional blessings for the bride & groom's parents and Best Man and Maid of Honor

**12:30 PM** – Closing prayer

*\* This agenda was created by the Augustine Institute and adapted by the Archdiocese of Cincinnati Marriage & Family Evangelization team.*







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