



Diocese of Evansville
4200 N. Kentucky Ave.
Evansville, IN 47711
Phone: 812-424-5536
www.evdio.org



Catholic Charities, Diocese of Evansville
610 E. Walnut Street, Suite 220A
Evansville, Indiana 47713
Phone: 812-423-5456
www.ccevanville.org/engagement-and-marriage.html

Marriage in the DIOCESE OF EVANSVILLE Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Marriage Preparation

1. I am newly engaged, want to get married in the Catholic Church, and have never been previously married. What steps should I take?

First, contact your priest or deacon at least six months prior to the anticipated date of your wedding. The priest or deacon, with whom you will periodically meet, is responsible for overseeing your marriage preparation. You will need to complete the Pre-Nuptial Investigation, and submit signed affidavits as proof of your freedom to marry, as well as a current baptismal certificate. Baptized non-Catholics who have no certificate of baptism, as well as non-Christians, must present a copy of one's birth certificate. The priest or deacon will assist you with all of the requirements.

Second, take a Pre-Marriage Inventory, which the priest, deacon or another parishioner involved in marriage ministry will facilitate. Most parishes in the Diocese of Evansville use FOCCUS© (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study), which is a self-diagnostic tool designed to help couples learn more about themselves and their unique relationship. Over the course of several meetings, you will discuss the FOCCUS© results with each other and the facilitator.

Third, register for and attend an approved marriage preparation program such as Sponsor Couples or Engaged Encounter, which offers focused time for you to examine your readiness for lifelong marriage and family life through sustained interaction and reflection with your proposed spouse. In most cases, the parish or Catholic Charities will facilitate the program.

Fourth, make final consultations with the priest or deacon. Obtain a marriage license at least one month, but no more than sixty days, before the ceremony. Present the license to your priest or deacon who will need that prior to the ceremony.

Fifth, agree on a wedding rehearsal date with the priest or deacon.

Please note that if you or your intended spouse has been previously married, a declaration of nullity (annulment) is required before a date for a wedding may be scheduled.

In addition, if you will be married in a different diocese than the one where the preparation occurs, this will necessitate some additional time for coordination with the other diocese.

For a step-by-step guide to getting married in the Diocese of Evansville, talk with your priest or deacon or go to the Catholic Charities engagement and marriage webpage:
www.ccevanville.org/engagement-and-marriage.html.

2. What is a Pre-Nuptial Investigation?

The Pre-Nuptial Investigation, which the priest or deacon administers to you and your proposed spouse individually, is a series of questions that establishes that you are free to enter marriage in the Catholic Church; freely exchange your consent; and in consenting to marry, you have the intention to marry for life, to be faithful to one another and to be open to children. The Pre-Nuptial Investigation is designed to help you to understand the profound meaning of marriage in the Catholic Church.

3. I am a Catholic who wants to get married in the Church but have not registered in a parish. What should I do?

Speak with a priest or deacon, who will be happy to talk with you. The diocesan website has a list of all of its parishes and the contact information available at www.evdio.org.

4. Why does the Church require engaged couples to participate in marriage preparation?

Marriage preparation offers couples the opportunity to develop a better understanding of Christian marriage; to assess and deepen their readiness to live married life; and to gain insights into themselves as individuals and as a couple.

Approved instruments such as the FOCCUS© Pre-Marriage Inventory are used to help couples grow in awareness and appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses that govern their ability to enter into and grow in a married love relationship.

Additionally, all couples are required to participate in an approved diocesan marriage preparation program.

5. What is a Pre-Marriage Inventory?

This is a self-diagnostic tool that is designed to help you learn more about yourself, your proposed spouse, and your unique relationship. Most parishes in the diocese use FOCCUS© (www.foccusinc.com), which requires that you complete an Inventory that addresses critical issues such as family background, faith, finances, communication, problem-solving, intimacy and sexuality. Over the course of several meetings, you will discuss your FOCCUS© results with each other and a trained facilitator, often the priest or deacon.

6. What approved marriage preparation programs are offered in the Diocese of Evansville?

Presently, the parish Sponsor Couple program and Engaged Encounter, which Catholic Charities helps to facilitate, are programs available that meet this diocesan requirement.

7. What is the Sponsor Couple program?

In this parish program, trained married couples journey with engaged couples, helping to prepare them for lifelong commitment to marriage and family life. The engaged couple is offered a working example of married people living-out their vows. Sponsor couples in the diocese use Fr. Robert Ruhnke's workbook, *For Better and For Ever* (www.marriagepreparation.com). During sessions, sponsor and engaged couples discuss individual chapters that center on topics such as family traditions, sexuality and intimacy, parenthood, money matters, and career planning.

For more information, talk with your priest or deacon, call Catholic Charities, or go to the engagement and marriage webpage.

8. Where do Sponsor Couple meetings take place?

The series of 5-6 meetings typically takes place in the home of the sponsor couple. Each meeting usually lasts approximately 90 minutes to two hours.

9. What is Engaged Encounter?

This is a weekend experience with other engaged couples that affords time together to plan for marriage in the Catholic Church. Couples are provided the opportunity to dialogue honestly and intensively about their prospective lives together—their strengths and weaknesses, desires, ambitions, goals, their attitude toward money, sex, children, family and their role in the Church and society—in a face-to-face way. Trained married couples and sometimes a priest, deacon, or consecrated religious person leads the weekend.

Talk with your priest or deacon or contact Catholic Charities. For more information, availability of weekend dates, or to register, go to www.ccevanville.org/engagement-and-marriage.html.

10. Where do Engaged Encounter weekends take place, when should I register, who may attend, and how much does it cost?

Presently, Engaged Encounter weekends are held at the Sarto Retreat House in Evansville. Registration is taken on a first-come, first-served basis, and Catholic Charities advises couples to register at least 3-5 months prior to their wedding date. Walk-ins cannot be accepted.

Engaged Encounter is open to any engaged couple wanting to prepare for a deeper, more meaningful life together in a marriage recognized by the Catholic Church.

In 2017, fees are \$205.00 per couple, which helps Catholic Charities to cover the cost of materials, rooms, and meals. Couples in a situation of true and demonstrated financial difficulty may call Catholic Charities; assistance may be available to those who would otherwise be unable to participate.

11. We are unable to attend a preparation program in the Diocese of Evansville. What should we do?

Talk with your priest or deacon. Nearby (arch)dioceses such as Owensboro, Indianapolis, Louisville, Belleville, and Saint Louis also offer many programs to prepare couples for marriage in the Catholic Church. A list of these may be found on the Catholic Charities engagement and marriage webpage.

12. May we participate in a marriage preparation program that is not facilitated by the Diocese of Evansville, a parish in the diocese, or another Catholic diocese?

All couples are required to participate in an approved marriage preparation program. In the Diocese of Evansville, Sponsor Couples and Engaged Encounter are the most widely used approved programs. Couples who cannot participate in one of these may, with the consent of their priest or deacon, attend a program that another Catholic diocese facilitates.

Programs that are not facilitated by the Diocese of Evansville, a parish in the diocese, or another Catholic diocese would not illuminate the specifically Catholic vocation of marriage or satisfactorily address the meaning and scope of marriage in the Catholic Church. Moreover, they may provide instruction that is not in accord with Catholic Church teaching. Consequently, those programs inadequately prepare couples for marriage in the Catholic Church and do not replace an approved Catholic marriage preparation program.

13. We are getting married in another diocese. May we enroll in a marriage preparation program in the Diocese of Evansville?

Speak with the priest or deacon who will be the officiant of your marriage. The other diocese may have its own specific requirements. Engaged Encounter is open to any engaged couple wanting to prepare for a deeper, more meaningful life together in a marriage recognized by the Catholic Church.

14. Is a Spanish-language marriage preparation program available?

Yes; a Spanish-language Sponsor Couple program (*En Las Buenas y Para Siempre/For Better and For Ever*) is available in several parishes in the Diocese of Evansville. For more information, contact the Office of Hispanic Ministry (812-683-5212) or go to www.evdio.org/hispanic-ministry.html.

15. What is Natural Family Planning?

All couples are encouraged to learn more about Natural Family Planning (NFP), which is an umbrella term for certain methods used to achieve or avoid pregnancy. These methods are based on observation of the naturally occurring signs and symptoms of the fertile and infertile phases of a woman's menstrual cycle. Couples using NFP to avoid pregnancy abstain from intercourse and genital contact during the fertile phase of the woman's cycle. No drugs, devices, or surgical procedures are used to avoid pregnancy. More information is available at www.ccevanville.org/pregnancy-and-fertility.html.

Presently, Catholic Charities collaborates with the Holy Family Center for Life, Inc., which is a Creighton Model FertilityCare™ Center that teaches the Creighton Model of Fertility Awareness. Holy Family Center for Life offers instruction in several locations, including Evansville, Fort Branch, and Jasper.

Moreover, free Introductory Sessions for Creighton Model FertilityCare™ are periodically held in the GIFT Conference Room on the 1st floor of St. Mary's Hospital for Women and Children in Evansville. These Introductory Sessions provide professional services in fertility awareness, cycle irregularities, determining the potential cause of infertility issues, breastfeeding, and menopause. To register for one of these sessions, or to learn more about Holy Family Center for Life services, call 812-421-2030 or email FertilityCareEvansville@gmail.com.

16. How should a couple prepare if at least one of the proposed spouses has been previously married?

Widows or widowers should follow the process of marriage preparation outlined above. A death certificate for your prior spouse will be needed as proof of your freedom to marry. Your priest or deacon may have additional suggestions to help you prepare for marriage.

If one or both of you is divorced, all previous marriages, whether the parties are Catholic or not, must be declared null by the Office of the Tribunal before you may enter marriage in the Catholic Church. To begin the investigation regarding a declaration of nullity (annulment), speak with your priest or deacon, who will assist you in submitting the petition to the Tribunal.

Please note that a wedding date may not be set, even a tentative one, until such time that the declaration of nullity has been granted.

The Sacrament of Matrimony

17. Why does the Church teach that marriage between baptized persons is a sacrament?

The For Your Marriage website, which is an initiative of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, explains, “The sacraments make Christ present in our midst. Like the other sacraments, marriage is not just for the good of individuals, or the couple, but for the community as a whole. The Catholic Church teaches that marriage between two baptized persons is a sacrament. The Old Testament prophets saw the marriage of a man and woman as a symbol of the covenant relationship between God and His people. The permanent and exclusive union between husband and wife mirrors the mutual commitment between God and His people. The Letter to the Ephesians says that this union is a symbol of the relationship between Christ and the Church.”¹

18. Why does the Church teach that marriage is a vocation?

The For Your Marriage website observes that a couple’s relationship “is more than simply their choice to enter a union which is a social and legal institution. In addition to these things, marriage involves a call from God and a response from two people who promise to build, with the help of divine grace, a lifelong, intimate and sacramental partnership of life and love.”

For Your Marriage continues, “The call to marriage is a particular way of living the universal call to holiness given to every Christian in the Sacrament of Baptism. The calls to priesthood, or to the vowed religious life, or to the single life are other Christian vocations. Along with marriage, all of them equally though in different ways, are a response to the Lord who says, ‘Follow me.’

The call to love is “the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being.” In the vocation of marriage—something which is “written in the very nature of man and woman,” we see that “the love of a husband and wife becomes an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves.”

A vocation is a personal call. It is offered freely and must be accepted freely. Attraction to a certain way of life or to a specific person can be a good sign of being called. Most often, a person comes to recognize and accept a vocation gradually. This process, sometimes called discernment, is an opportunity for growth. It can be helped by prayer and guidance from trusted mentors, friends, and family.

However, what begins as attraction must deepen into conviction and commitment. Those who are called to the married life should be ready to learn what their vocation means and to acquire the virtues and skills needed for a happy and holy marriage.

The vocation to marriage is a call to a life of holiness and service within the couple’s own relationship and in their family. As a particular way of following the Lord, this vocation also challenges a couple to live their marriage in a way that expresses God’s truth and love in the world.”²

¹ “About Catholic Marriage FAQs,” For Your Marriage, An Initiative of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, www.foryourmarriage.org/catholic-marriage/faqs.

² “The Vocation of Marriage,” For Your Marriage, An Initiative of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, www.foryourmarriage.org/the-vocation-of-marriage.

19. How does marriage lead to family?

The family is an intimate community of life and love, and marriage is its foundation. Family begins at the moment of marriage, even before children are born.

Every marriage between Christians generates a “church of the home” or “domestic church,” and it is Christ’s presence within the family that accomplishes this. The U.S. bishops explain that “Like the whole Church, every Christian family rests on a firm foundation, namely, Christ’s promise to be faithful to those he has chosen. When a man and a woman pledge themselves to each other in the Sacrament of Matrimony, they join in Christ’s promise and become a living sign of his union with the Church.”³

The home is the “first school of Christian life” as well as a “school of human enrichment,” and all family members are called to live out Christian virtues such as charity, joy, and peace. Fathers and mothers have a special responsibility for developing virtues in their children. Parents are “the first to proclaim the faith to their children. They are responsible for nurturing the vocation of each child, showing by example how to live the married life, and taking special care if a child might be called to priesthood or consecrated life.”⁴

20. What is a “Nuptial Mass” and when may a couple have one?

A Nuptial Mass is a Mass which includes the celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony and has special readings and prayers. The Sacrament of Matrimony between two baptized Catholics is celebrated within Mass.

If reasons are present and permission is obtained, a Nuptial Mass may be celebrated for a marriage between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic, except that Communion is not given to the non-Catholic. Since marriage is a sign of unity, another option is to use the appropriate ritual for marriage outside of Mass when it is a marriage of mixed religion.

Since a marriage between a baptized Catholic and a non-baptized person is not a sacrament, such marriages are always to take place outside of Mass.⁵

21. What is a “valid” Catholic marriage?

Every marriage is presumed to be valid unless proven otherwise since the Church strongly teaches the indissolubility of marriage. For Your Marriage explains, “Just as individual states have certain requirements for civil marriage (e.g., a marriage license, blood tests), the Catholic Church also has requirements before Catholics can be considered validly married in the eyes of the Church. A valid Catholic marriage results from four elements: (1) the spouses are free to marry; (2) they freely exchange their consent; (3) in consenting to marry, they have the intention to marry for life, to be faithful to one another and be open to children; and (4) their consent is given in the presence of two witnesses and before a properly authorized Church minister. Exceptions to the last requirement must be approved by Church authority.”⁶

³ U.S. Catholic Bishops, *Follow the Way of Love*, www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/follow-the-way-of-love.cfm.

⁴ U.S. Catholic Bishops, *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, available at www.usccb.org/upload/marriage-love-life-divine-plan-2009.pdf.

⁵ “About Catholic Marriage FAQs,” For Your Marriage, An Initiative of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, www.foryourmarriage.org/catholic-marriage/faqs.

⁶ Ibid.

22. Do our witnesses have to be Catholic?

While the priest or deacon stands as the Church's official witness, two other witnesses are also required. Customarily, this is the "best man" and "maid or matron of honor." The other two witnesses must be able to comprehend the event which is taking place and possess the use of reason. Preference is to be given to witnesses who are at least fourteen years old. They need not be of the opposite sex, or even Catholic.

23. May a Catholic marry a validly baptized non-Catholic?

Yes, although the bishop or his delegate of the diocese where the Catholic party resides must grant permission for a marriage of mixed religion. Talk with your priest or deacon who will guide you through the steps for preparing for an interfaith marriage.

24. May a Catholic marry a non-baptized person?

Yes, although the bishop or his delegate of the diocese where the Catholic party resides must grant a dispensation from disparity of worship for the validity of the marriage. Talk with your priest or deacon who will guide you through the steps for preparing for this marriage.

25. Must a non-Catholic who marries a Catholic promise to rear the children in the Catholic faith?

It is the responsibility of the Catholic spouse who must promise to do all in his or her power to have the children baptized and reared in the Catholic faith. This promise is not to be taken lightly since it is a serious commitment and a genuine obligation. The non-Catholic spouse must be fully informed about this obligation of the Catholic spouse.

26. May my proposed spouse's non-Catholic Christian minister participate in the wedding at the Catholic Church?

Yes; the non-Catholic Christian minister may be invited to sit in the sanctuary if he or she wishes. After the completion of the liturgy, the priest may invite the minister to offer his or her congratulations and encouragement to the couple, to pray for them, and to give a blessing.

27. May I marry my baptized non-Catholic proposed spouse at his or her church and still have it recognized as valid by the Catholic Church?

For sufficient reasons, it is possible for a Catholic to marry at the church of his or her baptized non-Catholic proposed spouse, although a dispensation from canonical form must be obtained from the bishop or his delegate of the diocese where the Catholic party resides. Talk with your priest or deacon about your plans, and he will help you take the necessary steps to petition for a dispensation.

If a dispensation from canonical form has been granted, the marriage will be celebrated outside of Mass, and the non-Catholic minister will officiate according to his or her own ritual. In that case, a priest does not need to be present.

28. We were married civilly, not in the Church. How do we have our marriage recognized by the Church?

Providing that both parties are free to marry, you may have your marriage recognized by the Church through convalidation, which is a Catholic marriage whereby you exchange your consent to each other before a priest or deacon and two witnesses, and are validly married in the Catholic

Church. This ceremony is not simply a blessing of a civil marriage but is a new exchange of consent by which the couple is married in the Church.

If either party was previously married, he or she must first obtain a declaration of nullity (annulment). Please talk with your priest or deacon about the steps that need to be taken to have your civil marriage convalidated by the Church.

The normal requirements of preparation for marriage are necessary for a convalidation, and opportunity is provided for many issues to be discussed during those meetings.

29. We are cohabiting. Will one of us have to move out before the wedding?

Cohabitation is commonly understood to mean living together in a sexual relationship without marriage.

Cohabitation is not in itself a canonical impediment to marriage. However, there may be other circumstances in which postponement of the marriage may be in order. A concern for the impact of cohabitation on the proposed spouses' freedom to marry, for example, could be a reason to delay the marriage until the issue is sufficiently discussed during marriage preparation.

The Church is sensitive to the fact that there are many different reasons that couples cohabit. The Church clearly teaches that cohabitating, like sexual intercourse outside of marriage between people who do not live together, "contradicts the meaning of sexual relationship in marriage as a total gift of oneself in fidelity, exclusivity, and permanency."⁷ Conjugal love must be definitive, and "cannot be an arrangement 'until further notice.'"⁸

During marriage preparation, the priest or deacon may wish to know more about your particular circumstances and why you have decided to cohabit. Even if you are not able to separate prior to the marriage, he may encourage you to live chastely and abstain from sexual activity until marriage, thereby following Christ and His Church. This allows you to better focus on the relationship as a whole partnership of life.

Depending on your particular situation, he may also invite you to consider separate living so that you and your proposed spouse have time to individually reflect on your decision to marry. As For Your Marriage observes, separation can be a concrete sign of the couple's free and loving decision to accept the Church's teaching on marriage and sexuality.⁹

If a couple is not able to separate prior to marriage and chooses to continue to present themselves publicly as husband and wife, their wedding liturgy should reflect that choice and be a simple ceremony; however, the choice of liturgy is left to the discretion of the pastor.

30. We have a pregnancy. May we get married in the Catholic Church?

The situation of pregnancy may not, by itself, prohibit a couple from getting married in the Catholic Church. However, the priest or deacon—so as to establish freedom to marry—may postpone the wedding if he determines that you seek to get married because you feel pressured by the situation of the pregnancy, especially if no plans for marriage had been made prior to learning of the pregnancy.

⁷ U.S. Catholic Bishops' Committee on Marriage and Family, "Marriage Preparation and Cohabiting Couples, an Information Report," www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/marriage-preparation/cohabiting.cfm.

⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1646.

⁹ "Cohabitation," For Your Marriage, An Initiative of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, www.foryourmarriage.org/catholic-marriage/church-teachings/cohabitation.

31. Why does a Catholic wedding have to take place in a church?

For Catholics, marriage is not just a social or family event, but a Church event with an impact on the faith community. For this reason, marriages between Catholics, or between Catholics and other Christians, are to be celebrated in a parish church. Only the bishop or his delegate may permit a marriage to be celebrated in a suitable non-Catholic church.

32. May my pet be part of the wedding?

No; only people may take part in this sacred ceremony.

33. How much does it cost to get married in the Catholic Church?

As the parish is providing a service to you—e.g., the priest or deacon ministers to you in marriage preparation, has the wedding rehearsal, and presides at the marriage; parish staff compile information for records; utilities of the building cost the parish; and others clean up following the ceremony—it is customary to make an offering to the parish. Ask your priest or deacon if there is an already determined amount that is expected for use of the church. Organist or vocalist fees may be separate as well as offerings for the servers. Although it is not required, you may desire to give a personal gift to the officiant.

In a situation of true financial difficulty, the couple should be able to arrive at an agreement with the priest or deacon so that true financial hardship will never prevent a Catholic marriage from taking place in the Church.

34. May my proposed spouse and I select the music and scriptural readings for the wedding?

Readings from sacred Scripture are a key component of the celebration of all of the sacraments. The *Order of Celebrating Matrimony* provides many options from which the couple may choose with the assistance of the priest, deacon, or other parish staff. All readings at a marriage liturgy must be from sacred Scripture as found in an approved *Lectionary*.

Music is often a very influential and important part of people's lives both in and out of worship. While the music for the marriage liturgy is one of the places that afford the most options, at the same time there are some guidelines that need to be followed in selecting liturgical music. You may help select the music used for the liturgy with the assistance and approval of the priest, deacon, or parish staff.

35. What music is appropriate?

In general, when deciding what music to use, here are some points to consider:

- Is it a well-written, quality piece of Catholic music?
- Are the text and music in keeping with the nature and needs of the liturgy?
- Will the music help the assembly to pray?
- Does it draw the assembly closer to the mysteries of Christ being celebrated?
- Is this particular piece of music appropriate for use in this particular liturgy?

In short, the music must express a Catholic view of love and marriage and also serve its proper purpose in its place in the liturgy. The music for the marriage liturgy with or without Mass should follow the same guidelines for the music found in a parish's weekend Masses. Either the priest or deacon assisting with the preparation or someone on the parish staff responsible for liturgical music should help the couple in making appropriate choices.

36. May we write our own vows?

The exchange of consent, or vows, is the moment in which the couple verbalizes “before God and his Church” the covenant relationship to which they are committing.

As with any sacrament, there is a certain form that is followed in its celebration. The vows express the Catholic belief of what is happening in the sacrament, and are essential to your consent in the celebration. It is for this reason that you must use the words of consent given in the *Order of Celebrating Matrimony*, similar to how the priest is committed to use the words found in the Eucharistic Prayer at Mass.

Marriage Enrichment and Struggling Marriages

37. Does my parish or diocese offer marriage enrichment?

Talk with your priest or deacon to find out about parish marriage enrichment programs and services. Many parishes employ the Sponsor Couple program, which is designed to not only prepare engaged couples for marriage but also to enrich the relationship of married sponsor couples. Additionally, some parishes facilitate the REFOCCUS© (Relationship Enrichment Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study) Inventory, which is a growth and enrichment tool designed to help couples at any stage in their marital relationship to affirm what is strong in their marriage and explore areas ready for growth and/or problem solving.

In regard to diocesan marriage enrichment, Catholic Charities annually implements Newly Married Workshops, which are designed for couples married less than five years. The focus of each two-hour workshop is on the spouses’ relationship with one another, and the most important work is done by the couple. A facilitator leads couples through prayer and introductions, and then each couple has the opportunity to explore short reflections and exercises designed to help them continue growing in their love for one another.

Catholic Charities sponsors other periodic marriage enrichment events, such as the Marriage Conference, which is a daylong event designed to help couples strengthen their bond and deepen their relationship with God. The event provides participants with practical advice for marriage enrichment.

38. Are other resources available?

Nearby dioceses offer a wide variety of marriage enrichment programs, services, and events, such as Marriage Encounter weekends. A list of these may be found on the Catholic Charities engagement and marriage webpage.

39. Are there resources for struggling marriages?

Marriage is a challenging vocation that requires community support and encouragement. To begin, struggling couples may consult their priest or deacon.

Catholic Charities offers individual, marital, and family counseling. Licensed social work counselors, located in Evansville, Jasper, Princeton, and Vincennes, can help spouses address the issues and concerns in their marriage. Call 812-423-5456 to set up an appointment at any of the four locations. More details are at the Catholic Charities counseling webpage: www.ccevanville.org/counseling.html.

Retrouvaille (www.retrouvaille.org) is another effective resource for marriages that are seriously struggling. The program helps to heal and renew marriages. Nearby, the Diocese of Owensboro and the Archdiocese of Indianapolis periodically facilitate Retrouvaille programs. For links to Retrouvaille programs, go to the Catholic Charities engagement and marriage webpage.

40. What is the difference between normal conflict and domestic violence?

For Your Marriage explains that “Conflict is part of every intimate relationship—that’s why conflict resolution skills are important. Domestic violence, however, has no place in a healthy relationship, whether the couple is dating, engaged, married, or cohabiting.”

“Domestic violence is any kind of behavior that a person uses, or threatens to use, to control an intimate partner,” and it can take various forms: physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, or economic. Threat and control are the two key elements.¹⁰

The U.S. Catholic Bishops have made clear that “violence against women, inside or outside the home, is *never* justified. Violence in any form—physical, sexual, psychological, or verbal—is sinful; often it is a crime as well... We acknowledge that violence has many forms, many causes, and many victims—men as well as women.” Some abused women and men may mistakenly believe that Church teaching on the permanence of marriage requires them to stay in an abusive relationship. In *When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women*, the Catholic bishops emphasize that “no person is expected to stay in an abusive marriage.” The Bishops continue, “Violence and abuse, not divorce, break up a marriage. We encourage abused persons who have divorced to investigate the possibility of seeking an annulment. An annulment... can frequently open the door to healing.”¹¹

The National Domestic Violence Hotline (www.thehotline.org/) provides crisis intervention and referrals for abused women and men to local sources of help in all 50 states. Call 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or 1-800-787-3224. Men and women who abuse can also call the National Domestic Violence Hotline for information about where to find help.

41. If I or my proposed spouse is divorced, what must be done before we are able to be married in the Catholic Church?

Prior to setting a date for a marriage in the Church, all previous marriages must be declared null by the Office of the Tribunal. This applies to both Catholics as well as non-Catholics since all marriages are presumed to be valid unless proven otherwise. Your priest or deacon will assist you with the preparation of the petition for submission to the Tribunal. If you should have questions, please contact the Office of the Tribunal at (812) 424-5536 or see the Tribunal tab located on the diocesan website at www.evdio.org.

42. There is a good amount of detail in this FAQs document about marriage in the Catholic Church—more than I expected!

You want a successful marriage, and we want that too!

The Catholic Church holds marriage as sacred and in such high esteem because of the belief that “marriage comes as a gift from the hand of God.”¹²

¹⁰ “Domestic Violence,” For Your Marriage, An Initiative of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, www.foryourmarriage.org/every marriage/overcoming-obstacles/domestic-violence.

¹¹ U.S. Catholic Bishops, *When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women*, available at www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/domestic-violence/when-i-call-for-help.cfm.

¹² “Catholic Beliefs,” For Your Marriage, An Initiative of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,” www.foryourmarriage.org/catholic-marriage/catholic-beliefs/.

“A marriage that is truly in Christ, a marriage upon which his school of gratitude and openness has left its mark of joy and warmth,” the U.S. Bishops explain, “is a sign of the Kingdom that is coming. It is a blessing to the couple, to their children, and to everyone who knows them. It offers a sign of hope and a loving witness to human dignity in a world where hope often seems absent and human dignity is often degraded. It is a sign of the Kingdom because the love of Christ moves the married couple to ever greater heights of love.”¹³

¹³ U.S. Catholic Bishops, *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, available at www.usccb.org/upload/marriage-love-life-divine-plan-2009.pdf.

Resources

Local resources

Diocese of Evansville, www.evdio.org, 812-424-5536.

Office of the Tribunal, Diocese of Evansville, 812-424-5536. Responsible for the work involved in assisting those who petition for a declaration of nullity (annulment).

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Evansville, www.ccevanville.org, 812-423-5456. The Family Life/Respect Life Program, which is located at Catholic Charities, coordinates marriage preparation and marriage and family enrichment. Catholic Charities' Master-level counselors also offer individual, marriage, and family counseling.

Holy Family Center for Life, Inc. (HFCL), www.ccevanville.org/pregnancy-and-fertility.html, 812-421-2030, FertilityCareEvansville@gmail.com. HFCL offers natural family planning instruction in three locations in southwest Indiana—Evansville, Jasper, and Fort Branch.

Other resources

For Your Marriage, www.foryourmarriage.org/ (**Por Tu Matrimonio**, www.portumatrimonio.org/). An initiative of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Offers practical help and advice on dating, engagement, and all stages of married life.

Marriage: Unique for a Reason, www.marriageuniqueforareason.org. An initiative of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Offers resources to assist with the education and catechesis of Catholics on why marriage is unique and why it should be promoted and protected as the union of one man and one woman.

National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers (NACFLM), <http://nacflm.org/>. NACFLM strives to implement a vision of family ministry encompassing the entire life cycle. Offers articles on a variety of issues related to marriage and family life.

FOCCUS©, www.foccusinc.com. Self-diagnostic tool that is designed to help you learn more about yourself, your proposed spouse, and your unique relationship

For Better and For Ever, <http://marriagepreparation.com>. A resource for couples preparing for life long marriage.

Retrouvaille, www.retrouvaille.org. Retrouvaille offers tools needed to rediscover a loving marriage relationship. Thousands of couples headed for cold, unloving relationships or divorce have successfully overcome their marriage problems by attending the program.

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