



## Preparation for the Sacrament of Matrimony

The Catholic Diocese of Richmond, as other Catholic dioceses, requires that a couple complete a preparation process in order for the wedding to proceed. This process requires several meetings with the priest or deacon who is preparing the couple, the acquisition of baptismal and confirmation certificates (if applicable), a premarital inventory assessment and an offsite marital preparation process. This process produces a record called the "marriage file." The completion of this process and the collection of the information needed is ultimately the responsibility of the couple. It is their responsibility to participate with their preparer so that the file is completed in a timely manner.

Couples who have been in prior marriages, whether religious or civil, and couples already civilly married, should inform their preparer at the beginning of the process.

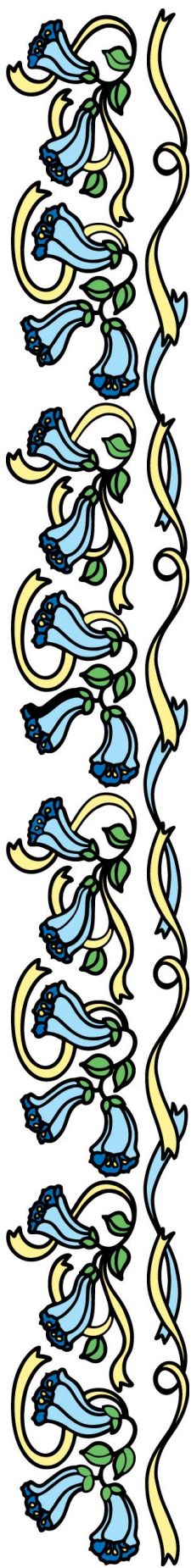
For more information on the premarital process in the Diocese of Richmond see: <http://www.cdrcmfl.org/marriage/immediatepreparation/>

If a couple lives within the parish of St. Olaf Catholic Church, the preparer is usually a priest or deacon of the parish.

If the couple lives in another parish they should contact their proper parish for guidance in participating in the program at that parish. If the preparation will occur outside of St. Olaf, the couple will have to assure, with their preparer, sufficient time for the marriage file to go through official channels to arrive at the parish in time (usually four weeks).

The preparation of a couple for marriage requires a significant dedication of parish resources. Couples should realize that it is their responsibility to provide the documents required and complete the requirements on a timely basis. Completing the preparation on time is a prerequisite to the celebration of the wedding.





### **Consideration: Prior Marriages**

One of the requirements of the Sacrament of Matrimony is that each party must be free to marry. This means that there is no existing sacramental bond arising from a prior marriage. A prior sacramental bond can exist even after a divorce has occurred.

If one or both of the couple requesting marriage in the Church have been married to another person before, in either a civil or a religious service, (unless that marriage was ended by the death of the spouse) they will be required to submit to a process to determine if they are free to enter the requested marriage. Any prior marriage should be discussed with the preparer so that a course of action can be determined.

### **Consideration: Cohabitation**

Although the Church does not approve of cohabitation, she also realizes that it is common among many couples who come to the Church for marriage. Without judgement, the Church asks the cohabitating couples to observe chastity through the preparation process to the wedding night. It is the hope that this time of abstinence will increase the longing of the couple and the wedding night will be a better sign of the sacramental union that the Rite of Marriage forms.