



Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton

*'We live out the call of baptism through personal faith in
Jesus witnessing together to the Good News of the Kingdom'
(Diocesan Vision Statement)*

Marriage Preparation Policy

01 January 2013

1. Introduction

"For Christians, marriage, which has its origin in God the Creator, also implies a real vocation to a particular state of life and grace. In order to be fully realised, this vocation requires adequate, particular preparation and a specific path of love within the Church and society." *The Pontifical Council for the Family: Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage # 9.*

The values and benefits of married life are intimately personal and openly social. Therefore, the divine, personal and social dimensions of marriage provide a curriculum and a process for marriage preparation and ongoing marriage education.

What is Marriage Preparation and why do it?

"Marriage preparation constitutes a providential and favourable period for those oriented toward this Christian sacrament... They are invited to understand the meaning of the responsible and mature love of that community of life and love which their family will be, a real domestic church which will contribute toward the enriching the whole Church." *The Pontifical Council for the Family: Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage # 2.*

Preparation for marriage involves a process of discernment, therefore pre-marriage education is designed to deepen the loving relationship of a couple, develop a deeper understanding of each other and their readiness to enter married life.

2. Values and Principles

The Church and accordingly the **Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton** believes that:

- Marriage celebrates and witnesses the covenant of love between two people and symbolises in that union Christ's covenant of love for the Church. The Catholic Church believes that the marriage bond is sacred and permanent.
- The central goal of the Church in marriage preparation is to prepare couples adequately to live their call to holiness through the sacrament of Marriage in the world and their specific culture.

3. Policy Statement

It is both a Civil and Church requirement that all couples prior to marriage participate in a Diocesan approved pre- marriage education programme.

Responsibilities

The Priest /Deacon or his Delegate has responsibility for:

- the preparation of the marriage documents
- the preparation of the liturgy of the marriage
- the theological implications of marriage as a sacrament
- referring the couple for pre-marriage education

The Couple has responsibility for:

- participating in relevant preparation with priest/deacon or his delegate
- booking and participating in a recognised pre-marriage education program

The Pre-marriage Educator has responsibility for:

- the delivery of a professional and appropriate pre-marriage education program that, as much as possible, meets the needs of each couple
- informing the relevant celebrant of the couple's participation in a pre-marriage education course upon completion

4. Notification of Marriage

- Engaged couples should give notice of their intention to marry at least six (6) months prior to the date of the marriage.
- A just reason is required for a dispensation to be granted from this required period of time.

5. Pre-marriage Education

- Pre-marriage education is required for all couples before their marriage.
- Centacare is the preferred provider of pre-marriage education for the Diocese. There are highly skilled and trained facilitators based in sites across the Diocese who deliver pre-marriage education programs in a variety of different formats, according to the needs of individual couples.
- FOCCUS (Facilitation Open Couple Communication Understanding and Study) is the program offered by Centacare.
- Prior approval would be needed for other accredited Catholic pre-marriage education programs.

6. Documents

According to Civil and Church Law, the couple must provide copies of their **Birth Certificates** (from the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages) and their **Baptismal Certificates**. For the Catholic person this certificate from the Parish of Baptism must be of no more than six months issued.