7. FINAL MEETING WITH YOUR PRIEST OR DEACON

When: Shortly before your wedding (Ideally 3-6 months before your wedding)

You will meet with your priest or deacon to ensure that everything is in order for your wedding liturgy. Talk with him about getting involved in your parish community so that the Church can continue to support you throughout your married life.

“He have you not read that from the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female’ … For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate.”

~Jesus Christ (Matthew 19:4-6)
1. MEET WITH YOUR PRIEST OR DEACON

When: As soon as you become engaged and BEFORE setting a wedding date (Ideally 9-18 months before your wedding)

After you become engaged, you should contact your parish as soon as possible and set up a meeting with a priest or deacon to assist you in your marriage preparation. During this initial meeting, the priest or deacon will provide you with the information needed to complete the marriage preparation process. He will meet with you several times before the wedding to provide catechesis on marriage, explore any critical issues that arise, and discuss other topics that may be pertinent.

2. MARRIAGE PREPARATION INVENTORY

When: As soon as possible after meeting with your priest or deacon (Ideally 9-12 months before your wedding)

Shortly after meeting with your priest or deacon, you will be asked to complete a marriage preparation inventory called Fully Engaged or FOCCUS. This is a series of questions designed to provide a personalized profile of your habits, expectations, and values. This is an important starting point for identifying and discussing any areas that need attention.

3. WITNESS TO LOVE

When: Shortly after meeting with your priest or deacon and continuing through your first few years of marriage (Ideally 9-12 months before the wedding)

You will be asked to choose your own marriage mentor couple who will accompany you during marriage preparation and throughout your first few years of marriage using the Witness to Love model. Witness to Love is a virtues-based, Catechumenate model of marriage renewal and preparation that integrates modern principles of psychology and the virtues to help couples facilitate an authentic dialogue about their relationship.

4. ENGAGED COUPLES RETREAT

When: After you complete the marriage preparation inventory (Ideally 6-9 months before your wedding)

You will be asked to participate in one or more of the following Engaged Couple’s Retreats:

• Archdiocesan Engaged Retreat Day
• Ruah Woods Joy-Filled Marriage Program
• Catholic Engaged Encounter
• Parish Based Marriage Preparation Retreat

Here you will explore the meaning and mystery of marriage and understand the promises you are making through the wedding vows. You will spend time with other engaged couples as you grow closer to Jesus Christ and your fiancé(e).

5. NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING (NFP) CLASS SERIES

When: After you complete the marriage preparation inventory (Ideally 6-9 months before your wedding)

You will be asked to complete a series of three or more NFP classes in order to learn how to plan your family in accord with God’s design for marriage. These classes are scheduled approximately one month apart and should be completed several months before your wedding. NFP is not only effective for naturally postponing pregnancy, it is also effective in overcoming obstacles that compromise your ability to become parents.

6. SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

When: Before your wedding (Prior to your wedding day and regularly throughout your married life)

The Church invites all Catholics to prepare themselves spiritually prior to their marriage by celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation. If it has been awhile since your last confession, simply make that known to the priest and he will gently walk you through the sacrament. Even if you are not Catholic, you still may benefit from meeting with a priest for spiritual direction. The regular practice of the sacrament of reconciliation helps keep marriages healthy and strong.

What God Has Joined