

Preparing for Marriage

Activity & Conversation Companion

For engaged couples and their mentors

USE BESIDE THE PREPARATION BOOK

Use with *Preparing for Our Marriage A Catholic Preparation Book for Engaged Couples*. The book supplies the Catholic teaching. This companion helps the two of you make it concrete, speak honestly and take practical steps towards a lifelong covenant.

THE METHOD

Start with the two of you

Do something concrete

Open the preparation book

Listen to each other

Check the central truth

Pray and act

PREPARING FOR A WHOLE LIFE

The wedding celebrates the covenant you will live each day. Preparation helps you understand marriage, choose it freely and begin habits of faithfulness, prayer and generous love. The priest establishes freedom to marry and directs the Church's formal preparation.

St Mary's • St John Bosco • St Edward's Parish

Couple • Mentor • Priest edition

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How to use this guide

FOUR CONVERSATIONS

Follow the four conversations in the preparation book. Each has a two-page activity and conversation here. The later pages offer practical helps when needed; they are not extra lessons to complete.

For each conversation

1. Begin with the Sign of the Cross and the opening prayer printed near the end, as each person is able to participate sincerely.
2. Ask the opening question. Let each person finish speaking before responding.
3. Try the activity. All cards can be written as you meet, or the headings can simply be spoken.
4. Open the matching conversation in the preparation book. Read REMEMBER and the teaching slowly, pausing for questions.
5. Talk honestly. Check the central truth and use THE ESSENTIALS in the book to clarify understanding.
6. Pray the printed prayer, choose one realistic action and return to it next time. Repeat or divide a conversation when needed.

Simple materials

The preparation book, this guide, paper and a pen are enough. No prepared talk, craft kit or internet search is required. A mentor can guide the conversation, or the couple can work together and bring questions to the priest.

FOR THE MENTOR

Listen without taking sides or requiring private details. Help the couple understand the teaching and name a useful next step. You do not establish freedom to marry, decide validity or replace specialist support.

An opening conversation

Begin with the couple's hopes and actual circumstances. A booked wedding must not prevent an honest question or a necessary pause.

Let each person speak

1. "What do you value most about the person you hope to marry?"
2. "What do you understand yourselves to be promising for life?"
3. "What place does faith have in your life now?"
4. "What question or concern should we address before the wedding?"

ESTABLISH FREEDOM TO MARRY

Use Appendix B with the priest early. Tell him about every previous marriage, Baptism and religious background, possible impediments, proposed venue and any concern about freedom or intention. Do not assume divorce or a civil marriage resolves the Church's enquiry.

Respect privacy and freedom

Agree how to meet and what support is needed for language, reading, disability, work or caring responsibilities. The couple need not give a mentor an account of their intimate life, finances or private sins. Necessary personal matters belong in an appropriate private conversation with the priest.

ONE NEXT STEP

Choose one useful beginning: arranging the priest's meeting, gathering the requested information, renewing Sunday Mass or making time for an honest couple conversation.

If either person is afraid to disagree or say no, offer a safe private opportunity to seek help. Threats, coercion and abuse must not be treated as ordinary differences to settle together.

God's Plan for Marriage

Page 1 • Opening & activity

AIM

Connect the lifelong covenant with fidelity, the good of the spouses and openness to life.

QUICK PREP

Three headings: UNITY, PERMANENCE, FRUITFULNESS.

BEGIN WITH THE COUPLE

Ask each person: “When I promise you my whole life, what do I mean?” Listen without trying immediately to make the answers match.

DO SOMETHING

A promise for an ordinary day

1. Write UNITY: one husband and one wife in exclusive fidelity. Each name one daily choice that protects faithfulness in body, heart and conduct.
2. Write PERMANENCE: a bond intended for life. Use this case: tiredness and disappointment make affection difficult. What does seeking the other's good require then?
3. Write FRUITFULNESS: love open to children and their upbringing. Name how children would be welcomed and how service and hospitality express generous love. Infertility does not make marriage less real.
4. Return to the opening sentences. Ask how this gift of persons differs from an arrangement kept only while convenient. Name one point needing clarification.

NOW OPEN THE PREPARATION BOOK

Read Conversation 1. Keep the good of the spouses, unity, indissolubility and openness to life together.

God's Plan for Marriage

Page 2 • Conversation, prayer & action

TALK TOGETHER

- “How will we help one another towards holiness as well as happiness?”
- “What does our covenant ask when affection or circumstances become difficult?”

CHECK THE CENTRAL TRUTH

What is marriage? A covenant of one man and one woman for the whole of life, ordered to their good and to children.

What are its essential properties? Unity and indissolubility.

When is a valid marriage sacramental? When both spouses are baptised.

USE THE BOOK'S QUESTIONS

Use THE ESSENTIALS in the matching conversation. Let each person explain the central truths in ordinary words before checking the book. Clarify rather than turn this into an examination.

PRAY TOGETHER

Lord Jesus, teach us to love with truth, fidelity and generosity. Help us understand the covenant we are preparing to make and seek one another's holiness. Amen.

TOGETHER THIS WEEK

Each complete the sentence “When I promise you my whole life, I mean...” Read the sentences to each other and discuss one difference honestly.

FOR THE MENTOR

Explain permanence without implying that a person must remain exposed to danger or abuse. Openness to life is not a demand to prove fertility. Do not settle doubts about intentions or a previous bond yourself; bring them privately to the priest.

Consent and the Sacrament

Page 1 • Opening & activity

AIM

Clarify free consent, freedom to marry, the Church's form and the grace of Matrimony.

QUICK PREP

Three headings: FREE, TRULY MARITAL, LAWFULLY EXPRESSED.

BEGIN WITH THE COUPLE

Ask each person: "What would help you make this promise freely and truthfully?" Allow space for a real answer rather than reassurance alone.

DO SOMETHING

What makes a marriage

1. Under FREE, write MY OWN CHOICE. Use an invented case: a person fears family humiliation if the wedding is postponed. Discuss why pressure cannot supply consent.
2. Under TRULY MARITAL, write FIDELITY, PERMANENCE and OPENNESS TO LIFE. These must be sincerely intended, not positively excluded behind spoken words.
3. Under LAWFULLY EXPRESSED, name the ordinary Catholic form: an authorised priest or deacon and two witnesses, unless a lawful dispensation applies. The priest checks what is required.
4. For two baptised spouses, explain that the spouses confer the sacrament on each other by consent in the Latin Church. Name the grace needed to forgive, persevere and grow in holiness.

NOW OPEN THE PREPARATION BOOK

Read Conversation 2 and Appendix B. Freedom to marry, permissions, dispensations and particular cases belong with the priest.

Consent and the Sacrament

Page 2 • Conversation, prayer & action

TALK TOGETHER

- “Is there any part of fidelity, permanence or openness to life that we do not yet understand or sincerely intend?”
- “What question needs a private conversation with the priest before we proceed?”

CHECK THE CENTRAL TRUTH

What makes marriage? Free and lawful consent of persons able to marry.

Can anyone supply another’s consent? No. Neither family nor the Church can replace it.

What does Matrimony give the baptised spouses? Grace to perfect love, strengthen fidelity and grow together in holiness.

USE THE BOOK’S QUESTIONS

Use THE ESSENTIALS in the matching conversation. Let each person explain the central truths in ordinary words before checking the book. Clarify rather than turn this into an examination.

PRAY TOGETHER

Lord, give us freedom of heart and honesty of speech. Remove fear, pretence and hidden reservations. Help us prepare for consent that is truthful and faithful. Amen.

TOGETHER THIS WEEK

Talk without interruption about what “faithful for life” means. Bring any unresolved question of freedom, intention or a previous marriage privately to the priest.

FOR THE MENTOR

Never use completion of an activity as evidence that consent is valid. Give each person a safe way to speak privately if needed. A positive exclusion of an essential element, coercion or a prior bond requires the priest’s attention before the wedding.

Living Catholic Marriage

Page 1 • Opening & activity

AIM

Choose concrete habits of worship, communication, fidelity, forgiveness and generous family life.

QUICK PREP

Four headings: PRAYER, DAILY LIFE, REPAIR, FAMILY.

BEGIN WITH THE COUPLE

Ask: “If someone watched an ordinary week of our life, what kind of marriage would they expect us to build?”

DO SOMETHING

The first month of married life

1. Under PRAYER, choose a brief printed prayer and plan Sunday Mass for the Catholic spouse or spouses. Discuss honestly how differences of faith will be respected.
2. Under DAILY LIFE, name one expectation about money, phones, work or household duties. Let each person explain before agreeing what is fair and realistic.
3. Under REPAIR, use a minor invented disagreement. Practise listening, a truthful apology and one concrete repair. Serious intimidation or abuse needs safety and specialist help, not this exercise.
4. Under FAMILY, discuss openness to children and their Catholic upbringing. Read the book on marital intimacy and responsible parenthood; name any question for the priest. Choose two habits to begin.

NOW OPEN THE PREPARATION BOOK

Read Conversation 3 and use Appendices D and G as needed. Private couple discussions do not require disclosure of intimate details to a mentor.

Living Catholic Marriage

Page 2 • Conversation, prayer & action

TALK TOGETHER

- “What will help our home become a place where faith is lived?”
- “How will we speak about intimacy, fertility and difficulties without pressure or avoidance?”

CHECK THE CENTRAL TRUTH

What is the domestic church? The Christian household where faith, grace and prayer are lived.

What does marital intimacy express? Faithful, total self-gift with its unitive and procreative meanings together.

What should we do about serious difficulties? Seek truth, safety, pastoral help and appropriate professional support early.

USE THE BOOK’S QUESTIONS

Use THE ESSENTIALS in the matching conversation. Let each person explain the central truths in ordinary words before checking the book. Clarify rather than turn this into an examination.

PRAY TOGETHER

Lord Jesus, make our future home a place of prayer, truth, tenderness and mercy. Teach us to forgive, remain faithful and welcome your will generously. Amen.

TOGETHER THIS WEEK

Begin two agreed habits: one for prayer or Sunday worship and one for ordinary life, such as a time to talk without phones or a regular money conversation.

FOR THE MENTOR

Use the book’s teaching on chastity, openness to life and responsible parenthood. Respect privacy; refer personal or medical questions to appropriate help. Forgiveness never excuses violence, forced sex or control.

The Wedding Rite and the Vows

Page 1 • Opening & activity

AIM

Connect the celebration's central actions with the covenant lived after the wedding.

QUICK PREP

Four headings: INTENTIONS, CONSENT, RINGS, BLESSING. No rings are needed.

BEGIN WITH THE COUPLE

Ask each person: "Which part of a lifelong promise will ask most of you in twenty years?"

DO SOMETHING

The day and the daily promise

1. Under INTENTIONS, name freedom, lifelong fidelity and openness to children and their upbringing. These express the marriage being undertaken, not merely a ceremonial introduction.
2. Under CONSENT, name the free gift and acceptance of one another in marriage. Explain that this is the heart of the celebration; use only the parish's approved wording for actual rehearsal.
3. Under RINGS, name a sign of the covenant. Under BLESSING, name the Church's prayer for grace to live married life faithfully. Neither replaces consent.
4. For each heading, name one daily consequence: honest choices, protected fidelity, generous family life or asking for God's help. Bring practical ceremony questions to the parish.

NOW OPEN THE PREPARATION BOOK

Read Conversation 4 and Appendix A. The activity uses these printed meanings; the parish supplies the approved texts for the celebration.

The Wedding Rite and the Vows

Page 2 • Conversation, prayer & action

TALK TOGETHER

- “What makes the spoken consent a truthful act of will rather than a performance?”
- “How will we remember the covenant through ordinary actions after the wedding?”

CHECK THE CENTRAL TRUTH

What is the heart of the celebration? The exchange of matrimonial consent.

What do the rings signify? The faithful covenant already entered.

What is the nuptial blessing? The Church’s prayer for blessing, strength and holiness in married life.

USE THE BOOK’S QUESTIONS

Use THE ESSENTIALS in the matching conversation. Let each person explain the central truths in ordinary words before checking the book. Clarify rather than turn this into an examination.

PRAY TOGETHER

Lord Jesus, may the words of our wedding day be true in our hearts and faithful in our life. Write our promises into daily choices and keep us close to you. Amen.

TOGETHER THIS WEEK

Choose one practical act that will express the covenant. When the parish gives the approved form of consent, read it slowly and bring any question before the rehearsal.

FOR THE MENTOR

Use the approved liturgical book and parish direction for actual words, readings, music and movements. A rite within or outside Mass is decided with the priest. Do not substitute invented vows or let concern about performance obscure sincerity and freedom.

Faith and the home we hope to build

Use with Conversation 3 and Appendix D. Let each person describe actual practice and hopes. Neither should pretend to have a faith they do not hold.

A simple activity

1. Draw or say three headings: NOW, OUR FUTURE HOME and QUESTIONS. Under NOW, each describe prayer, Mass and the place of faith in present life.
2. Under OUR FUTURE HOME, plan how Catholic worship will be supported, what prayer can be shared sincerely and how children would be formed in faith.
3. Under QUESTIONS, name a difference or practical obstacle: Sunday work, caring duties, another religious background or uncertainty about belief.
4. Choose one next step: attend Sunday Mass, pray a printed prayer together if both can do so sincerely, or speak with the priest about a difference.

Talk together

“How will we protect the Catholic spouse’s practice without pressure or mockery?”

“What will a child learn about faith from watching us?”

“What support do we need from the parish?”

WHEN FAITH DIFFERS

The non-Catholic spouse is not required to pretend to be Catholic. The priest explains the permission or dispensation and the Catholic party’s promises about perseverance in faith and doing all in their power for the baptism and Catholic upbringing of children.

ONE HABIT

Choose a regular moment for gratitude, a simple prayer where possible and a practical plan for Sunday worship. Begin with what can be kept faithfully.

Listening, disagreement and repair

Use with Appendix D. Practise only an ordinary, safe disagreement. Each person should be able to speak and decline the exercise freely.

Try a small invented case

One spouse wants a quiet evening; the other has invited friends without discussing it. Neither is threatened or afraid.

1. One person says what happened, how it affected them and what they need, without insults or guessing motives.
2. The other repeats what they heard before explaining their own view. The first person confirms or corrects it.
3. Each identify a truthful responsibility: perhaps failing to consult, dismissing tiredness or speaking unkindly. Practise an apology without excuses.
4. Agree a repair and a future habit, such as consulting before invitations. If a pause is needed, agree when to return to the conversation.

Talk together

“When I am upset, do I pursue, withdraw, shout or become sarcastic?”

“What helps us return to an ordinary disagreement calmly?”

“What does a sincere apology need to change?”

WHEN THIS EXERCISE IS NOT APPROPRIATE

Threats, intimidation, violence, forced sex, isolation or controlling behaviour are not ordinary conflict. Do not use a joint communication exercise to resolve abuse. Seek a safe private conversation and appropriate specialist help.

FOR THE MENTOR

Do not press either person to describe frightening experiences in front of the other. Forgiveness does not mean accepting danger or abandoning necessary boundaries. Follow parish safeguarding arrangements when concerns arise.

Money, work and shared responsibilities

Use with Appendix D. The couple discuss actual information privately. A mentor needs no account numbers, balances or list of personal debts.

What each person expects

1. Each name expectations about earning, spending, saving, giving and debt. Listen before deciding whether they match.
2. List ordinary responsibilities: meals, cleaning, appointments, household finances, care of relatives and, if children come, childcare.
3. For each responsibility, ask who has time, ability and capacity. Discuss paid work, illness and caring duties as well as fairness.
4. Choose a regular money conversation and one way to review responsibilities as circumstances change. Name anything needing further help.

Talk together

- “What financial information affecting our life together still needs to be shared?”
- “How will major purchases and borrowing be discussed?”
- “What changes would we make if work or health altered?”
- “How will we remain generous to those in need?”

HONESTY AND MUTUAL RESPECT

Important debt, financial commitments and patterns affecting the household should not be hidden. Financial decisions should respect both persons' dignity and freedom; control, intimidation or imposed deprivation are not ordinary budgeting differences.

TOGETHER THIS WEEK

Set aside an unhurried private conversation about finances and responsibilities. Choose one agreement to begin and one question to revisit. Seek appropriate advice for matters beyond your knowledge.

Children, intimacy and responsible parenthood

Use Conversation 3 and Appendix D. This is a respectful couple conversation, not a request for intimate details to share with a mentor.

Understand before making assumptions

1. Each explain what openness to children means. Discuss hopes about parenthood, care, work and the handing-on of Catholic faith.
2. Read the book's teaching: marital union belongs within marriage and should express faithful self-gift, keeping the unitive and procreative meanings together.
3. Discuss responsible parenthood as generous, prudent discernment according to God's law. For just reasons, periodic abstinence and moral fertility-awareness methods may be used; deliberate contraception is contrary to Catholic teaching.
4. Name a genuine question for the priest. If practical fertility-awareness instruction is needed, seek suitable trained support rather than guessing from this activity.

Talk together

"Can we discuss affection, expectations and difficulties respectfully and without pressure?"

"How would we support one another if children did not come?"

"What needs clearer teaching or appropriate personal advice?"

CHILDREN ARE GIFTS

Infertility does not by itself prohibit or invalidate marriage. Openness to life is different from biological ability to conceive. Questions about the ability to consummate marriage are distinct and belong privately with the priest.

FOR THE MENTOR

Give the Church's teaching accurately and allow questions. Never demand intimate disclosures or offer medical advice. Forced sex or coercion requires safety and specialist help; it is not marital self-giving.

Family, health and technology

Use Appendix D privately as needed. Choose one area at a time rather than trying to disclose every personal matter in a group.

Family and friendships

Each name an expectation about parents, relatives, holidays and friendships. Use this case: both families expect the couple for the same celebration. Discuss how to honour family while making a shared, fair decision.

Health and habits

Ask whether important matters affecting married life have been honestly discussed: health, addiction, gambling, alcohol or drugs, serious debt or legal difficulties. A mentor does not diagnose or require a written record. Seek pastoral and appropriate professional help early.

Technology and fidelity

Discuss phones at meals, private messages, social media, pornography and time online. Choose habits that protect fidelity and attention. Healthy boundaries should not become surveillance, isolation or control.

A practical activity

1. Each complete: “One expectation I bring from my family is...” Listen for a difference without assuming one family is the standard.
2. Choose one habit about time, technology or family contact that will strengthen the marriage.
3. Name one unresolved question. Decide whether it needs further couple discussion, a private priest’s meeting or specialist help.

TOGETHER THIS WEEK

Try the chosen habit, such as a meal without phones or consulting each other before family commitments. Review whether it helped both people.

Freedom to marry and parish preparation

Use Appendix B and the priest's current instructions. These matters are established through the Church's enquiry, not by completing an activity sheet.

Previous marriages

Tell the priest about every previous marriage, including civil ceremonies and marriages in another country. Do not assume divorce, years apart or a non-Catholic ceremony means no bond exists.

Baptism and religious background

Explain where and whether each person was baptised and their present religious affiliation. The priest determines the permissions, dispensations and form that apply.

Freedom and intention

Bring concerns about pressure, grave fear, fidelity, permanence or excluding children to the priest. Each person needs a safe opportunity to speak privately.

Other particular circumstances

Mention possible impediments and questions about consummation privately. Infertility is a different matter; do not make your own canonical judgement.

Documents and civil requirements

Follow the parish's current checklist. It normally includes a recently issued baptismal certificate for each Catholic party and information establishing freedom to marry. Follow current parish and registrar directions for civil documents.

Venue and celebration

Confirm what is possible before relying on another venue or involving another minister. The priest directs permissions, approved texts and the celebration within or outside Mass.

ONE PRACTICAL STEP

Make a list of questions and outstanding documents for the priest. Do not rely on a promise that a previous bond or permission will "probably be fine".

Readiness in faith, freedom and intention

Use Appendix E with the priest. This is a pastoral conversation, not a pass or fail examination. The couple need not agree about every preference, but must freely intend marriage.

FREE CHOICE

Each is choosing freely and can speak honestly without coercion, grave fear or pressure to preserve a booked wedding.

FREEDOM TO MARRY

Every previous marriage and fact affecting freedom has been disclosed to the priest and appropriately investigated.

THE COVENANT

Both understand marriage as a lifelong covenant of one man and one woman, for their good and naturally ordered to children and their upbringing.

FIDELITY AND PERMANENCE

Both intend exclusive fidelity and marriage for life. There is no hidden plan for another relationship or a pre-planned exit when life becomes difficult.

OPENNESS TO LIFE

Neither positively excludes children from the marriage. Hopes and questions about family life and Catholic upbringing have been discussed.

FAITH

The Catholic party intends fidelity to the Church. The couple understand the place of Catholic worship and the obligations applicable to their circumstances.

A known reservation or serious uncertainty needs attention before the wedding. The priest establishes freedom and readiness under Church law and diocesan direction.

Readiness in ordinary life and support

Use Appendix E and the practical pages here. Readiness is not a claim to be a perfect couple. It includes honesty, willingness to seek help and a realistic beginning.

HONEST CONVERSATIONS

Money, work, health, family expectations, intimacy, fertility, habits and technology have been discussed truthfully and respectfully.

SAFETY AND DIGNITY

Neither is afraid of the other or being controlled or coerced. Serious danger is addressed through safety and appropriate specialist help, not a promise to try harder.

SACRAMENTAL LIFE

Catholic parties understand the value of Confession before the wedding, worthy Communion and Sunday Mass in married life.

PRAYER AND DAILY HABITS

The couple have chosen realistic habits of gratitude, attention, fair responsibilities, forgiveness and prayer as appropriate.

THE CELEBRATION

The couple understand the basic rite and will follow parish direction for approved consent, readings, music and practical arrangements.

CONTINUING SUPPORT

The couple know whom to approach when difficulties arise and have a practical plan for parish belonging and support after the wedding.

WHEN MORE TIME IS NEEDED

Name the actual difficulty and arrange the right help. Preparation serves truth and freedom; a wedding timetable must not hide an unresolved serious concern.

A calm walk through the wedding rite

Use Conversation 4 and Appendix A with the priest or deacon. This outline explains the main actions; it is not a script or a substitute for the approved rite.

Gathering and the Word of God

The couple and assembly gather for worship. Approved Scripture readings and the homily open the meaning of marriage.

Questions before consent

The couple express freedom and their intentions for marriage in the approved form. Understand the promises rather than merely rehearsing a response.

The exchange and reception of consent

Each gives and receives the other in marriage. The priest or deacon receives the consent in the name of the Church. This is the heart of the celebration.

Blessing and giving of rings

The rings signify the covenant and fidelity. Follow the approved words and the parish's practical directions.

Prayer blessing and the Eucharist

Intercessions and the nuptial blessing ask God's help. When celebrated within Mass, the Eucharistic liturgy is included; follow the approved rite's sequence.

Sent to live the covenant

The final blessing sends the spouses into married life. Plan thanksgiving and ordinary faithfulness beyond the wedding day.

A USEFUL REHEARSAL

Practise approved spoken responses and movements with parish guidance. Ask about mobility, hearing, anxiety or other needs early. Attend to the meaning of consent as well as where to stand.

Preparing spiritually for the wedding

Use Appendix F and speak with the priest. Catholic spouses are strongly encouraged to prepare through prayer and Confession, approaching marriage and Holy Communion in the state of grace.

The mentor's part

Help arrange an opportunity for Confession and explain its purpose. A preparation meeting is not Confession. Neither a mentor nor a fiancé or fiancée is entitled to an account of the other person's private sins.

A peaceful preparation

1. Ask God for light. Examine conscience privately, be sorry for sin and sincerely intend to turn from it with his help.
2. Begin Confession with the Sign of the Cross and say how long it has been. If many years have passed, say so; the priest will help.
3. Confess sins honestly and simply. Mortal sins not yet confessed should be told in kind and number as well as can be remembered. Ask for help if unsure.
4. Listen to counsel and the penance. Pray an Act of Contrition, printed here, and receive absolution.
5. Give thanks, carry out the penance and begin again. Repair harm where possible and seek help with persistent difficulties.

Honesty and conversion

The book explains chastity before marriage, including for couples already living together. Bring questions honestly to the priest. Grace helps a real beginning; preparation must not become a pretence.

PRAY TOGETHER

Lord Jesus, prepare our hearts for a truthful covenant. Help us repent, receive your mercy and grow in faithful love. Amen.

Prayers for preparation and married life

The Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

An opening prayer

Lord Jesus, help us listen with patience, speak truthfully and understand the marriage we are preparing to enter. Guide our choices and teach us to seek one another's good. Amen.

The Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

An Act of Contrition

O my God, because you are so good, I am very sorry that I have sinned against you, and by the help of your grace I will not sin again. Amen.

Grace before meals

Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts, which we are about to receive from thy bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

A couple's prayer

Lord Jesus, be at the centre of our marriage. Teach us to be faithful, truthful, tender and forgiving. Give us courage in difficulty, gratitude in joy, generosity in family life and perseverance in faith. Lead us together towards eternal life. Amen.

WHEN FAITH DIFFERS

Pray in a way each can join sincerely. Respect does not require the Catholic spouse to hide faith or the non-Catholic spouse to profess a belief they do not hold.

After the wedding

Use Appendix G. Choose a small rule of life that can be kept. The covenant is lived through repeated acts of fidelity, generosity, mercy and prayer.

Each day

Speak one word of gratitude, give attention and show ordinary affection. Pray together briefly where possible and tell the truth kindly.

Each week

Keep Sunday Mass central for the Catholic spouse or spouses. Make time to talk without phones about how each person is doing.

Regularly

Review finances and responsibilities together. Catholic spouses use Confession regularly and receive Communion worthily. Continue learning about the faith.

In family life

Protect fidelity and speak respectfully about intimacy and fertility. If children are given, pray with them, bring them to Mass and teach them the faith.

When difficulties arise

Seek help early. Ordinary conflict calls for truthful repair; danger or abuse requires safety and specialist support. Neither should endure serious harm in silence.

KEEP A SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIP

Agree a suitable conversation after the wedding with the mentor or priest. Review one good habit, one question and one practical need. Keep friendships and parish relationships that strengthen married life.

For the mentor

Offer steady encouragement without intruding. Continue to point towards Christ, faithful worship and the duties of married life. Refer serious difficulties to pastoral and appropriate professional support.

References for the priest and mentor

This guide follows the four conversations in Preparing for Our Marriage A Catholic Preparation Book for Engaged Couples. The book supplies the teaching; this companion supplies activities and practical accompaniment.

Appendices A and B

The wedding rite, freedom to marry, permissions, dispensations, documents and parish preparation.

Appendices C and D

Central truths and honest conversations about faith, communication, money, intimacy, family life, health, habits and safety.

Appendices E and F

Readiness and common pastoral or canonical questions.

Appendix G

A simple rule of continuing married life and the book's doctrinal references.

Primary Church sources

Sacred Scripture: Genesis 1–2; Matthew 19:3–6; John 2:1–11; 1 Corinthians 7 and 13; Ephesians 5:21–33; Colossians 3:12–17.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1601–1666 on Matrimony; 2331–2400 on chastity, conjugal love and responsible parenthood; 1455–1456 on confession of sins.

Code of Canon Law: canons 1055–1165 on marriage, especially consent, impediments, canonical form and mixed marriages; canon 988 on confession of sins.

The approved Order of Celebrating Matrimony, current diocesan policy and the priest's direction govern particular cases and the celebration. Follow the parish and registrar's current civil instructions.

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