



### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Your parish is always the first place you should go with your questions. You can also read more, including the full text of the Diocese of Sacramento's Marriage Preparation Policy, at [www.scd.org/engaged](http://www.scd.org/engaged)

### Office of the Tribunal

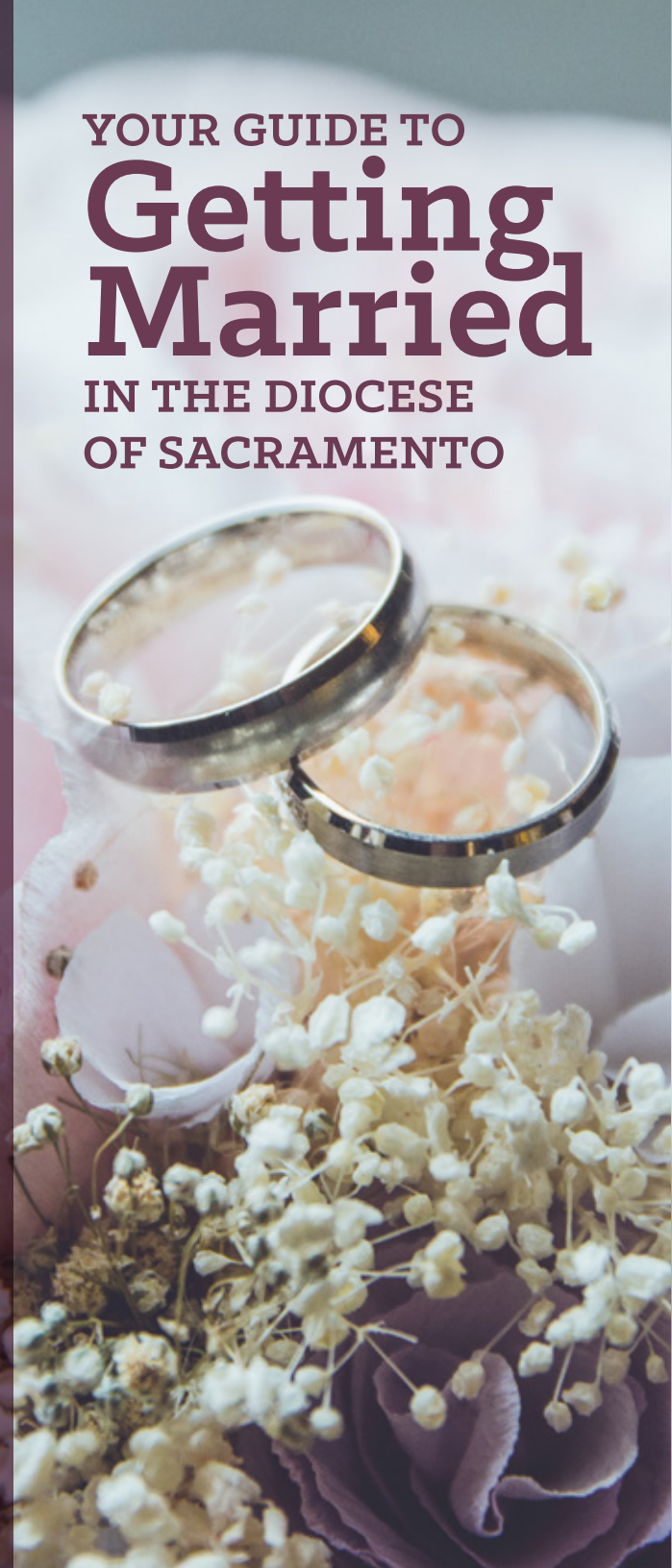
Call the Office of the Tribunal at **916-733-0225** if your parish cannot answer your questions about any canonical (legal) issues, especially about what to do if one of you has been married before, what to do if you're getting married out of the state or country, etc.

### Office of Family & Faith Formation

Call the Office of Family and Faith Formation at **916-733-0177** if your parish cannot answer your questions about educational issues, like marriage preparation classes, the NFP requirement, the premarital inventory, etc. If you're not sure who to call, call this number.

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# YOUR GUIDE TO Getting Married IN THE DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO



## CONGRATULATIONS!

Engagement can be one of the most exciting times of your lives – and rightfully so. You are preparing not only for a beautiful ceremony but moreover for a lifetime together as husband and wife. By solemnly professing your commitment to one another before God and the Church, your two separate lives will become a single, intimate union, indissoluble until death.

Because of the sacredness and the seriousness of what you'll be doing, the Church offers you tools to create a foundation that will help you not only survive in marriage but also receive all the joy and fulfillment that God wants to give you.

## Steps for Getting Married

These steps are an outline and not an exhaustive list of everything you need to do to prepare for marriage in the Diocese of Sacramento. For more details, go to [www.scd.org/engaged](http://www.scd.org/engaged). Please understand that your parish may ask additional things of you.

## Contact the Parish

Your process starts by contacting a Catholic parish to meet with a priest or deacon. The Diocese of Sacramento requires at least six months of marriage preparation, which means your proposed wedding date can be no sooner than six months after that first meeting. This applies regardless of how long you may have already been engaged, so it's obviously a good idea to contact your parish soon after you get engaged.

The parish to contact is usually either of your home parishes, even if you intend to get married at another parish. If one of you is not Catholic, or if either of you has been married before, make sure to tell this to the priest or deacon up front, since it will mean some additional forms and procedures.

In all cases, your priest or deacon is there to provide you with the guidance, forms, and resources you need. Preparing for a wedding and a marriage can be stressful. Make it less so by doing everything he asks in a timely fashion.

If your parish is fortunate enough to have some form of sponsor couple ministry, your priest or deacon may also assign you a married couple to accompany and support you through your marriage prep process.

## Take a Premarital Inventory

You are asked to take an approved premarital inventory. FOCCUS is the most popular, but there are others. Each has these characteristics:

1. Though not a "test", each is scientifically designed and standardized, and so should be administered in a controlled setting. The results should likewise be carefully reviewed with you only by a trained facilitator.
2. The goal is to help you self-identify the strengths and growth areas of your relationship by responding to a battery of "agree/disagree/not sure" statements. The issues span everything from problem-solving to finances to spirituality to sexuality to parenting and so forth.



3. Even though you wouldn't be engaged if you didn't already know each other very well, almost all couples who take the inventory are surprised (and sometimes stunned) to discover new things about their fiancé(e) and their relationship.
4. The effectiveness of your inventory experience depends highly upon how early you take it in your engagement. The closer you get to your wedding, the less mental space you will have to reflect upon the results. If a take-it-early option is not available at your parish, there is an online option at [www.scd.org/engaged](http://www.scd.org/engaged)

## Attend a Formal Marriage Preparation Program

Sometime during the first four months of your engagement you should complete a formal marriage preparation program or class. There are three options:

1. **A parish-based marriage preparation class:** If your parish offers one, take it. If it doesn't, or for some reason you cannot take it, there may be a neighboring "magnet" parish that offers one. For a current list, go to [www.scd.org/engaged](http://www.scd.org/engaged)
2. **The Engaged Encounter Weekend:** This retreat, offered several times each year, includes a series of presentations by two married couples and a priest and provides lots of individual time for reflection and couple time for the two of you to dialogue. For more information go to [www.sacee.org](http://www.sacee.org)
3. **Online Marriage Preparation:** If you cannot attend either #1 or #2, an online option is available. You will be assigned a couple to guide you through resources focused on building a strong, Christ-centered marriage. It lasts from one week (minimum) to three months (maximum) depending upon your pace. For more information go to [www.scd.org/engaged](http://www.scd.org/engaged)



## Get Introduced to Natural Family Planning

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is a low-cost, modern method of achieving or avoiding pregnancy. You learn how to observe, chart, and make your family planning decisions in harmony with the woman's naturally-occurring, observable, biological indicators of fertility. NFP is not only a morally acceptable means of spacing children, but couples who use it tend to have healthier, stronger, and happier marriages than couples who use contraception. For these reasons the Diocese asks you to attend an NFP introductory session.

This session should be a minimum of one hour, and it must be given by a certified NFP teacher. After attending it, you will be given a certificate of completion which you submit to your priest or deacon.

For an up-to-date list of local, certified NFP teachers, please refer to the NFP webpage of the Diocese of Sacramento: [www.scd.org/nfp](http://www.scd.org/nfp). If there is no local, live instruction available, contact the Family Life office at 916-733-0133 for an online option.



## Plan Your Wedding

Your wedding in the Catholic Church will be your own special moment, and so you should plan it with personal care and involvement. But it will also be much more than just your event. Just like a priest's ordination or a baby's baptism belongs not just to them as individuals, but to the Church as a body, so does your wedding. As sacraments, each of these is a public, sacred event, and so any personal desires we might have for receiving them must conform to the Church's norms.

Your priest or deacon will provide you the guidance and resources you need to prepare your wedding celebration according to these norms. Visit [www.scd.org/engaged](http://www.scd.org/engaged) for more information, including FAQ's about wedding liturgies.

## Become One!

When you publicly profess your commitment to one another before God on your wedding day, you will be become one: united as husband and wife, to have and to hold, until death do you part. By God's grace, may you prepare well – with seriousness and with joy – for that most important moment of your lives.