



THE BASILICA OF SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST

Dear Engaged Couple,

First, let us say: congratulations on your engagement! We are happy that you want to be prepared for marriage at the Basilica Parish of Saint John the Evangelist and look forward to working with you. Below we have laid out what our program entails. Please feel free to contact us with any questions!

The Church asks every couple seeking to get married to have a minimum of six months of engagement before their wedding day. Our marriage preparation program (*Witness to Love*) is designed to be completed over this time period, so please know that we schedule wedding dates six months out (or longer) from when you begin your preparation, not six months from the date you first got engaged! Our goal in this is to ensure that the marriage preparation—one of the most vital aspects of preparing for the Sacrament—is taken seriously.

Please note: Getting married at the Basilica is conditional on the completion of all the expectations listed below.

First Step:

1. Contact one of the priests of the parish to make an appointment to see him. (203) 324-1553 – Msgr. DiGiovanni ext. 11; Fr. Vill ext. 130).
2. When you come to your meeting with Father, **please bring with you a new copy of your baptismal record.** To request a copy, simply call the parish where each of you was baptized and ask them to send you a new copy of your “baptismal certificate with notations on the back”.

At this first meeting, you will get to know Father and he will ask you a few questions and take down some initial information. At the end of the meeting he will assign you a marriage preparation coordinator couple. This is a couple from the parish who will assist you along the way to complete the marriage preparation program of Saint John’s.

Second Step:

1. After meeting with Father, you will receive an email from your coordinator couple with a web link for you to **fill out a Prepare and Enrich marriage preparation questionnaire.** This will serve as a tool to highlight strengths in your relationship and areas for growth.
2. At this point, we also ask that you choose a mentor couple. The parish provides you with the coordinator couple who is trained to facilitate your working through *Witness to Love*, but we want you to pick a mentor couple who will accompany you during your engagement period. They will be expected to meet with you six times to go over the materials in the *Witness to Love* workbooks as well as be a support for you. The criteria we ask you to use when you pick a mentor couple are simple:
 - The couple must be married in the Catholic Church for at least five (5) years.
 - The couple must attend church regularly.
 - The couple must have a marriage you admire!

Please note: It is only once you have chosen a mentor couple that the date for your wedding will be confirmed on the parish calendar; keep this in mind and don’t delay!

Third Step:

1. **Meet with your marriage preparation coordinator couple.** Once you have completed step two, contact the coordinator couple to set up a time to meet. They will invite you and your mentor couple to dinner to go over the *Witness to Love* program, explain the results of the Prepare and Enrich questionnaire you filled out, and discuss other important details of the marriage preparation process.
2. The next day, **the coordinator couple will email you a “Scavenger Hunt”**; this is a check list of sorts which includes some fun activities for you to do with your mentor couple during the marriage preparation process (ex: go on a double date planned by the guys.)

Complete instruction in Natural Family Planning (NFP). The Church takes very seriously the call to holiness and therefore we want to empower couples to live their marriages well. Through various scientific methods, couples are able to track their fertility and grow in their knowledge of how NFP can be used to assist in achieving or avoiding pregnancy. We ask every couple to complete this three month course which consists in one (60-minute) introductory session with five (60-minute) follow up sessions (two follow up sessions the first month, two the second month and one the third month). Since this takes three months, we encourage couples to begin this as early as possible in the marriage preparation process. The cost of the course is \$140* and is taught by Angela Marchetti (angelamarchettifcp@gmail.com). More information will be provided by the coordinator couple.

** The cost for the Prepare and Enrich questionnaire and other Witness to Love materials are paid for by the parish of Saint John's as a gift to the engaged couples. We do ask that the engaged couples assume the responsibility of paying for their NFP course. (\$140 is a reduced price for the course offered to engaged couples who are being prepared for marriage at the Basilica.) That being said, we do not want anyone to be unable to take the course because of money concerns. Anyone with financial difficulties may speak directly to the priests to make other arrangements.*

3. **Attend a Theology of Marriage discussion with Father.** This has two parts.
 - **Attend a talk given by one of the priests on the theology of marriage.**
 - **Invite the priest who is assisting with your marriage preparation over for your fifth meeting with your mentor couple** (this is not an additional night, but one of the six scheduled with your mentor couple) . This is usually done over dinner at the mentor couple's house and gives you and your mentor couple an opportunity to ask Father any questions about marriage and the Catholic faith.
4. Plan the wedding ceremony with Father. One month before your wedding date , sit down with Father to go over the readings you have chosen, let him know how many people are in the wedding party, decide whether or not there will be a presentation of flowers to Mary, etc...

Most importantly, be assured of our prayers for you both during this exciting time of preparation for marriage! May God bless you along the journey to the altar.

In Christ,

The Basilica of Saint John's Marriage Preparation Team