



## *Marriage Preparation: Beginning your life together*

The Church's hope for engaged couples is a strong, Christian marriage. Our preparation programs are designed specifically to help couples grow in their understanding of marriage as a lifelong sacrament and to provide them with the necessary tools needed to build a satisfying and successful marriage.

### *Important Steps for Marriage Preparation in the Diocese of Erie:*

1. **IF** you haven't done so already, we recommend that you contact your parish priest *at least* 6 months in advance of your wedding date to provide you with ample time to look clearly at your relationship and prepare for the lifelong journey of marriage.
2. **YOUR MEETINGS** with your priest or deacon will include the completion of important documents prior to your wedding. In addition, you will be asked to complete the [FOCCUS](#) instrument-- a series of questions contained in a booklet that helps couples to begin thinking about the similarities and differences they will bring to their marriage. [FOCCUS](#) is not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers; instead, it is an aid which reveals a surprising array of information that is always useful to couples. You will also be given an opportunity to discuss your answers at future meetings which will give you valuable insight into your relationship.
3. **THE NEXT STEP** in the process involves your attending a 'formal' marriage preparation program such as [Engagement Encounter](#), [Pre Cana](#) or [Nova](#) (for couples free to remarry in the Catholic Church). Choose the program that best suits your needs and register in plenty of time before your wedding date so you and your fiancé can process the information you've learned and begin to apply the newfound skills you've acquired.
4. **AS** a final step in the preparation process, arrange a meeting with the priest or deacon to plan your wedding liturgy. By planning your ceremony together, you help to make your wedding day as beautiful and memorable as it should be. Your choice of readings, music and prayers will symbolize the sacrament you are entering into. Choosing them *together* can also be a deeply intimate and spiritual time for the two of you.

Our warmest congratulations and best wishes to both of you as you embark on this new chapter of your lives! May God bless you during this special time of preparation.

