

Dear Pastors, Pastoral Administrators and Marriage Preparation Coordinators,

This letter complements Bishop Finn's approving new marriage preparation materials for use by parishes along with a new "Lead Couple" training process. Many years have passed since the last update of materials for use in parishes to prepare the engaged for marriage. Since that time many cultural and societal developments have made the context of marriage preparation even more challenging. These materials address these most difficult issues and are designed to better equip Lead Couples for the challenge.

Additionally, these new materials incorporate the themes found in the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2010 letter on the vocation of marriage titled: Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan, which, along with the National Directory for Catechesis (2005) was used as a source for the criteria for the review of materials by the review board.

These changes only affect the use of materials by Lead Couples in the parish and the corresponding training to prepare them to use the materials. There are **no** other changes to the current Marriage Preparation process shown below:

There are four required elements to marriage preparation; they are listed below in the order in which they ought to be completed: (see the enclosed brochure for a full description of the process)

1. Pre-Marital Assessment Inventory (Prepare II or Foccus)
2. Second Saturday Seminar "God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage"
3. Introductory session for Natural Family Planning
4. One of three programs, whichever is appropriate: Marriage Preparation Sessions with a Lead Couple, Catholic Engaged Encounter, To Trust Again!

To provide time for training and transition, the Office of Family Life will begin a **one year implementation period (July 2013-July 2014)** with trainings for the new materials available immediately. During this period previously approved materials will be supported by the diocesan office, but trainings will no longer be offered. Lead Couples are expected to be using approved materials by July 2014.

Recruitment and Training Process for Lead Couples

To help facilitate recruitment of new Lead Couples the process includes two parts: **Part I – Marriage Enrichment** and **Part II – Materials Training**. The first part, Marriage Enrichment, provides an excellent opportunity to touch the lives of married couples in each parish even if they are not already thinking about getting involved in the work of marriage preparation. At the completion of this time of study, discussion, and prayer they will be invited to prayerfully consider becoming a Lead Couple and attend the second part of the training process.

Those who currently serve as Lead Couples should be invited by their pastor (and/or Marriage Preparation Coordinator) to consider this opportunity to train to use

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these newly approved materials as a chance to hone their current skills in this ministry. All Lead Couples will be trained using this new process so that they will be equipped to take full advantage of the features of these programs.

Overview of the two-part Lead Couple training process

Part I – *Marriage Enrichment* ó Participation in either “One in Christ: Marriage Renewal” or the BHI course “Marriage and Family.” Following completion, couples who are interested in training to become a Lead Couple for their parish participate in a discernment interview (organized by the Office of Family Life) to help determine both the suitability of the couple to this work and their ability to witness and teach the engaged about the sacrament of Matrimony. A simple report from the interview will be given to the Pastor and Marriage Coordinator to aid their decision about each couple.

Part II – *Materials Training* ó Program-specific training (6-hours). Trainings will be offered in both a Saturday, all day format and a weeknight format (one night each week for three-weeks) at locations throughout the diocese with schedule to be published.

Implementation overview

Step One (July 2013): Bishop’s approval and summary of the review board findings made available to clergy and lay leaders.

Step Two (August-October 2013): Through visits to deanery meetings and parishes the director of the Office of Family Life will explain the changes, answer questions, and help pastors and coordinators make decisions about which of the approved materials they will use.

Step Three (Beginning July 2013): Lead Couple Trainings, Part I, *Marriage Enrichment* will be scheduled in strategic locations to cover all 13 deaneries.

Step Four (Beginning September 2013): Lead Couple Trainings, Part II, *Materials Training* ó Trainings on how to use the new programs will be offered at various locations throughout the diocese on a regular basis.

I invite you to consider **three things you can do to help facilitate this new process:**

1. You can host a marriage enrichment event or course at your parish and help married couples become motivated to attend.
2. You can communicate this new process to your existing volunteers so that they may become excited about the renewal it can bring to their marriage and ministry.
3. You can review the newly approved materials and begin to consider which program will best serve the needs of the engaged in your parish. You may contact me or visit our website for more information about the new materials.

I look forward to working with you to implement these changes. Please contact me with your questions and to discuss hosting a marriage enrichment event in your parish or deanery.

Sincerely in Christ,

Dino Durando, Director ó Office of Family Life
816-714-2371 (direct) e-mail: durando@diocesekcsj.org