



MARRIAGE PREPARATION FOR CONVALIDATION & RE-MARRIAGE

March 2020

This year the Family Life Office will begin providing an Archdiocesan marriage preparation program customized for those planning **convalidation or re-marriage**. This **Convalidation/Re-Marriage preparation program** will focus on the specific needs that couples face who have been civilly married, or who are planning a second marriage, as many of them already have children or could have fallen into unhealthy habits in regard to communication, finances, family and faith.

In these marital situations, couples might be asking themselves: "Why do we need to prepare for marriage if we've been together for a long time or if we have already been married before?" Marriage preparation is one of the most important steps a couple can take to nurture their new marriage. Many couples with previous marriage experience who are entering into a marriage again might think they don't need marriage preparation, including attending Pre-Cana; however, they may be unaware of the unique challenges that entering into a sacramental marriage could bring at this stage in their lives.

The goal of the program, which includes a **Convalidation Prep Day**, will be to help the couples see the value in preparing for marriage regardless of their age and life experience. We have engaged an experienced marriage ministries developer to adapt our current marriage prep program into a successful convalidation preparation program.

Who would benefit from a Convalidation Preparation Program?

Ultimately, it is the priest or deacon's discernment as to whether they want to prepare couples [eligible for convalidation] on their own, or whether they prefer to send them to a formal preparation program such as an Archdiocesan program. There are also situations which likely warrant pastoral exceptions, e.g., older couples married for many years, who would benefit more from private preparation.

Currently, civilly married couples preparing for convalidation come to the regular English and Spanish marriage prep program, which includes a Pre-Cana day.

- To get a sense of "how many" couples come to regular Marriage Prep/Pre-Cana, in the 2017-2018 Archdiocesan Marriage Prep programming, 11% (257) of the 2274 couples who came to English Marriage Prep/Pre-Cana were convalidating, and 48% (150) of the 310 couples who came to Spanish Marriage Prep/Pre-Cana were convalidating.

If a priest/deacon decides to send a couple to a formal program, our **recommended criteria** for discerning which couples should participate in a **Convalidation Prep program (instead of a regular Marriage Prep/Pre-Cana program)** include:

- couples who have been **civily married for over 3 years**
- couples **preparing for re-marriage** in the Catholic Church
- **'somewhat' older couples** (e.g., 45+) who are marrying for the first time

In regard to **re-marriage**, the Convalidation Prep program is intended for couples where one or both spouses are entering a marriage after an annulment or the death of a spouse.

Spanish-language Convalidation Prep Program

For Spanish-language convalidation preparation, it hasn't yet been determined whether to develop and schedule separate convalidation prep days, or to modify the current Pre-Cana day content instead to accommodate convalidating couples. Because the Spanish Pre-Cana days already have small class sizes spread across multiple areas and timeframes, we would need to determine the feasibility of adding additional Convalidation Prep days to the annual schedule.

The Family Life Office will consult with the Presbyteral Council regarding decisions about a Spanish-language convalidation program. While this is pending, all Spanish-speaking couples could/should continue to register for the regular Archdiocesan Spanish Marriage Prep Program which includes a Spanish-speaking Pre-Cana Day.

English-language Convalidation Prep Program

At this time, we are scheduling **two English-language Convalidation Prep days** in 2020 as shown in the chart below. As we evaluate the demand for English-language convalidation preparation, we will add more English Convalidation Prep days to the 2021 schedule.

English Convalidation Prep Days	Time	Location*
Saturday, October 24, 2020	9:00 am – 4:00 pm	Manhattan
Saturday, November 21, 2020	9:00 am – 4:00 pm	Westchester

** Specific location will be finalized and published by May 2020.*

Promotion of the English Convalidation Prep Program

We anticipate being able to accommodate up to 120 couples in the 2020 English Convalidation Prep options (above), and we will begin promoting these options in multiple ways, but particularly via *Archways*, *Catholic New York* (via a May 2020 Marriage Insert), bulletin inserts, parish rack cards, and digital/social media, including

Flocknotes. The promotional material will guide the couple to **first contact their parish** and make an appointment to discuss their situation with the pastor or his delegate regarding convalidation or second marriage.

Cost

The cost for the program is the same as the regular Archdiocesan Marriage Preparation Program - **\$150**.

Registration

Registration for the Convalidation Prep program will be open beginning **May 1, 2020** and will be done in the same way as the regular marriage prep registration is done. The only difference is that when the couple is choosing their in-person day, they will choose a **"Convalidation Prep"** Day instead of a "Pre-Cana" Day.

The couple will register for their marriage preparation via the Family Life website (archny.org/family-life/marriage-prep/), following the instructions and prompts to register and complete the program.

The Archdiocesan in-person Convalidation Prep Day

We are calling the in-person day a **Convalidation Prep Day** to clearly distinguish it from a **Pre-Cana Day**. The content of the current Pre-Cana Day is being customized to address a convalidation/re-marriage audience.

The structure of this "customized" day would be consistent with the "regular" Pre-Cana, utilizing the same format: Videos, PowerPoint presentation, Facilitator couple's witness/testimony, and couple exercises. Once we launch the new program, we will evaluate presenters and content based on anonymous attendee evaluations and onsite quality checks by the Family Life staff, and make adjustments as needed.

The Online Components

The online components of the current Archdiocesan Marriage Preparation Program would remain in the structure of the Convalidation/Re-Marriage program. These online components include: the registration process/payment, the online premarital inventory (*Prepare/Enrich* or *Catholic Couple Checkup*), the two Formed.org video/learning modules, and the online evaluations and downloadable certificate of completion.

Questions and Feedback

As we work to build the convalidation programming for the Archdiocese, we are open to feedback and suggestions from the clergy for both the English and the Spanish programming. Please feel free to call Kathy Wither at **646-794-3186** or email her at dr.kathleen.wither@archny.org to schedule a time to discuss this programming.