



## ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK FAMILY LIFE

TO: Pastors and Administrators  
FROM: Theodore Musco, Director  
RE: The Marriage Catechumenate: Phase One: Pre-Cana Facilitators, Pre-Cana Assistants, and Married Couple Mentors  
DATE: March 15, 2023

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Listed among the four major initiatives of the Office of Family Life for the 2023-2024 Pastoral Year is what Pope Francis calls, “the implementation of a **true catechumenate of future spouses** including all the steps of the sacramental path: its celebration, and the years immediately thereafter”. (Pope Francis, Address to participants in the course on the marriage process, February 25, 2017) We refer to this as *The Marriage Catechumenate*.

In *Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life: Pastoral Guidelines for Local Churches* from the Vatican Dicastery of Laity, Family and Life, we read:

It is the duty of the entire ecclesial community to elaborate a **catechumenal pathway for marriage preparation** and to offer concrete accompaniment to couples along this path. The journey should be shared among priests, Christian spouses, religious men and women, and pastoral workers, who must collaborate among themselves and in agreement with their bishop. Marriage is not only a social act; for Christians, it is an “ecclesial” act.

The Holy Father calls for a process articulated in phases, marked by rites of passage to be celebrated by and within the parish community. It is a process like the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA). Historically, here in the Archdiocese of New York, there have been several versions of a Pre-Cana process as well as various marriage enrichment opportunities. This summer, I have been asked to attend a conference sponsored by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to discuss pathways toward establishing a complete marriage catechumenate process, explained above. I look forward to sharing our work with others throughout the country.

Our approach will be deliberate, conscious of what has occurred previously and attentive to the progress needed to be made. Creating an environment where marriage and family life are priorities is essential to our well-being.

The first step in formulating a marriage catechumenate process with many options is for me to meet with those already involved in marriage preparation (Pre-Cana) both at the local and archdiocesan level. While we have a list of those currently involved at the archdiocesan level, I

ask that you provide contact information for those in your parish or collaborative who minister in this area . We also need to identify additional hosts, facilitators, mentor couples, and parish family life directors who will assist in the marriage catechumenate as part of their duty as a member of the ecclesial community (a form accompanies this memorandum).

**For marriage preparation**, we seek to identify couples who can:

- Catechize the engaged couple
- Evangelize the engaged couple
- Accompany the engaged couple, families, and friends
- Pray for the engaged couple

**For marriage enrichment**, we seek to identify couples who can:

- Accompany the married couple and family
- Witness God's faithful love to the married couple and family
- Advocate for the married couple and family
- Evangelize and pray for the married couple, family, and friends

As we continue to develop this marriage catechumenate process, training and formation will be essential. As you begin to identify couples, let them know that more information will be forthcoming, and we will accompany them in this important ministry. Anyone who wishes to participate in a leadership role will be given ample training and formation.

We need priests and deacons as well who can assist us in the formation of the marriage catechumenate process at the Archdiocesan level. Please email or call me if you have a particular interest in any or all aspects of the marriage catechumenate. For your information, I attached a copy of the USCCB slide regarding the overview of the marriage catechumenate (see attachment) which we will discuss in detail in the future.

I look forward to sharing more information with you as we move through these next few months and most likely into the early part of next year. Your prayers and support are needed to fulfill this important mission. If you have any thoughts or would like to offer your services, please do not hesitate to contact me. You remain in my prayers.