

Diocese of Colorado Springs

Office of the Bishop
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GENERAL DECREE: REGARDING MATRIMONY

**TO BE OBSERVED BY
ALL MEMBERS OF THE FAITHFUL**

1.

Pastors of souls are especially entrusted with the task of assisting at marriages and imparting nuptial blessings (can. 530, °4). A central part of this function of a pastor's ministry is exercised in his diligent preparation of couples for entry into the married state. A pastor is responsible for guaranteeing that the marriage preparation as herein prescribed for the Diocese of Colorado Springs is duly completed prior to the exchange of consent. Even if the pastor delegates a parochial vicar or deacon to conduct this preparation, the pastor is solely responsible and cannot be absent from the process within his parish.

Preliminary Matters

2.

1§ To ensure that the engaged couples have adequate time to prepare in a serious way, and to ensure that this stage of preparation is truly "proximate" and not "immediate", it should (if at all possible) begin *at least 12 months* in advance of the couple's anticipated wedding date and conclude no closer than *2 months* prior to that date.

2§ Marriage preparation is to begin at the proper parish of one of the contracting parties; this parish is determined in accordance with the diocesan general norms¹. If the pastor of this parish

¹ The general norm of the Diocese of Colorado Springs is hereby established as:

1§ The proper parish of members of Christ's faithful is territorial and determined, in accord with universal law, by domicile or quasi-domicile (can. 102). If, however, a person 'registers' at a parish distinct from that one in whose territory they reside, that person or persons, along with said household, possess that parish as their secondary proper parish. This prescription does not apply to those who reside within the Diocese of Colorado Springs, but are registered in a parish that belongs to another diocese.

2§ Each deanery has a Hispanic center; the parish that serves as the Hispanic center for a deanery can be a person's secondary proper parish if the prescriptions of 1§ above are followed.

finds it opportune, he is free to transfer the preparation to another priest or deacon. However, the pastor is to be present, in conjunction with the cleric overseeing the proximate preparation, at least at the beginning and at the completion of the preparation of which he is responsible.

3.

1§ Priests and deacons are not to give dispensations for the whole, or even a part, of the requirements for marriage preparation in the Diocese of Colorado Springs. In order to waive a certain requirement of marriage preparation as presented in the present statutes, a dispensation from the competent authority must be granted. Requests for a dispensation must be made in writing to the Chancellor, who is the Bishop's delegate in these matters, or even to the Diocesan Bishop himself.

2§ No one in the Church has the power to dispense the good of children from the marital union. Vasectomy and tubal ligation are two of the strongest statements against children. Should one of these procedures have been procured and a subsequent repentance of the sin manifested, a letter from the pastor detailing the situation must be written to the Chancellor. In these cases it is always best that a person seek to reverse the procedure in which their fertility was mutilated. If this is not advisable or possible, a note from the party's physician detailing this must accompany the letter. If they have truly changed their mind and have embraced the good of children as part of the marriage consent, they must sign an affidavit saying they will not request this as a potential chapter of nullity should they petition for a declaration of nullity in the event the marriage fails.

4.

1§ For couples who live outside the territory of the Diocese of Colorado Springs, but who wish to celebrate their marriage within this Diocese, evidence of adequate preparation within the Diocese where the couple resides must be presented to the Chancellor of Colorado Springs at least one month prior to the scheduled wedding. As a minimum, the couple must have completed all the requirements of the Diocese of their domicile or quasi-domicile. Normally, the written confirmation (*visum est*) from the chancellor of the couple's home diocese will be sought. The Chancellor of Colorado Springs will, in turn, grant his *nihil obstat* along with all required permissions (hereby understood to include can. 1115 if not previously granted) and transmit the marriage file to the parish where the marriage will take place.

2§ If the diocese wherein the couple completes their marriage preparation does not require freedom to marry affidavits (equivalent to our '*Freedom to Marry: Witness Testimony*' [i.e. *MB* form]), then at least one *MB* form for this Diocese is to be completed for each party prior to the wedding. The priest or deacon witnessing the marriage must ensure that this is done no later than the rehearsal. If need be, the best-man and the maid-of-honor are to complete these forms at the rehearsal itself.

3§ Parish registration is not required for the reception of any sacraments, or for any participation in parish life, including serving in ministries.

5.

1§ Couples who live within the territory of the Diocese of Colorado Springs wishing to do their marriage preparation within said territory must duly complete the preparation herein prescribed.

2§ All completed marriage files must be submitted to the Office of the Chancellor for his overview (*visum est*).

1° For couples getting married within the territory of the Diocese of Colorado Springs, the completed original marriage file must be submitted at least *one month prior* to the planned wedding date.

2° For those couples getting married outside of the territory of the Diocese, the completed original marriage file must be submitted no later than *six weeks prior* to the planned date of the wedding; if going out of the country, please allow *three months minimum*. Once received, the Office of the Chancellor will review the file and (if all is in order) transmit it to the chancellor of the diocese where the marriage will take place.

3§ If all is not in order with the marriage file, the Office of the Chancellor will return the file to the parish for completion.

6.

The prescript of can. 1065 §1 of the Code of Canon Law pertaining to the need for Catholics to receive the sacrament of confirmation before (*antequam*) matrimony is not an impediment and pastors must not prevent a marriage from taking place on this account.

Required Preparation Process

7.

1§ Proximate preparation for matrimony in the Diocese of Colorado Springs includes the following steps:

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| (1) Initial interview and Pre-Nuptial Inquiry | <i>obligatory</i> |
| (2) Marriage Preparation Classes | <i>obligatory</i> |
| (3) Natural Family Planning Classes | <i>obligatory</i> |
| (4) Pre-Nuptial Inventory and its Review | <i>obligatory</i> |
| (5) Engaged Encounter weekend or equivalent | <i>optional</i> |
| (6) Final meeting | <i>obligatory</i> |

2§ Any request for dispensation from an ‘obligatory’ step as listed above (viz. steps 1-4, and 6) must be made by the pastor in writing to the Chancellor of the Diocese of Colorado Springs; all requests must provide adequate reasons pursuant of its concession. Exercise of the one ‘optional’ step listed above is left to the discretion of the pastor overseeing the preparation, not the engaged couple.

Each of the six steps to Marriage Preparation in the Diocese of Colorado Springs are herein detailed:

1) **Initial Interview and Pre-Nuptial Inquiry:** *(obligatory)*

Couples approaching the Church for marriage are usually enthusiastic but also unaware of most diocesan and parish policies concerning marriage preparation. It is critical that the first person they encounter be positive and welcoming, using this first encounter as a time for evangelization.

The goals of this initial interview are as follows:

- Begin developing a warm and welcoming relationship with the couple.
- Begin to ascertain the couple's attitudes, beliefs, and expectations about themselves and their desire for marriage in the Catholic Church.
- Explain to the couple what is involved in their proximate and immediate preparation for the marriage and assist them in planning accordingly (the marriage preparation classes, NFP classes, scheduling the pre-nuptial inventory and its review, Engaged Encounter Weekend retreat or equivalent, etc.)
- Welcome this future family in the Church.
- At this stage (be it the same initial encounter or a meeting to follow it), the pre-nuptial inquiry is to be conducted.

According to the Code of Canon Law (can. 1066 & 1067):

Before a marriage takes place, it must be established that nothing stands in the way of its valid and licit celebration.

The Episcopal Conference is to lay down norms concerning the questions to be asked of the parties, the publication of marriage banns, and the other appropriate means of enquiry to be carried out before marriage. Only when he has carefully observed these norms may the pastor (*parochus*) assist at a marriage.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has decreed that the following shall be observed (effective as of 1 December 2000):

- **The couple should receive appropriate education and pastoral preparation through participation in a marriage preparation program approved by the diocesan bishop;**
- **Parties should be questioned as to their freedom to marry;**
- **Baptized Catholics should present a recently issued annotated baptismal certificate;**

- **Where necessary, additional documentation (such as affidavits of parents) attesting to a Catholic party's freedom to marry should be presented;**
- **Baptized non-Catholics should present satisfactory proof of baptism and freedom to marry;**
- **Unbaptized persons should present satisfactory proof of freedom to marry;**
- **Preparation for marriage should be in conformity with the prescriptions of canon 1063 (regarding what must precede marriage) and canons 1064, 1071, 1072, 1086, §2 and 1125, which entrust certain situations to the special care of local ordinaries;**
- **Preparation for marriage should be in compliance with appropriate civil laws.**

In the Diocese of Colorado Springs, this canonically required *pre-nuptial inquiry* must be duly carried out so as to ensure that nothing stands in the way of a valid and licit marriage. The pastor, in conjunction with the cleric overseeing the couple's preparation, must be astute in his detection of any potential impediments to marriage or imminent defects of consent. When in doubt about what impedes or vitiates marital consent, he ought to contact the Office of the Chancellor or the Diocesan Tribunal for clarification.



8.

This initial interview with the engaged couple, under normal circumstances, is to be conducted by the pastor.

9.

In explaining the process of marriage preparation, the priest or deacon should stress that it is a positive aid to the couple. It should not be seen as a 'hoop to jump through' before the couple is 'permitted' to marry in the Church. In preparing to contract this covenant fruitfully, proper formation is necessary to ensure that the marriage, be it sacramental or natural, is: celebrated in good faith, established on the sure foundation which is the Natural Law, and will be a truly valid union. The process of preparation aims to assist the couple in seeing strengths and in addressing any weaknesses; it also aims to address any impediments to a valid union and avoid any defects of consent.

10.

When beginning this initial interview, couples must be advised not to make definitive plans for reception sites, etc. The precise wedding date is not to be set until it has been determined that the parties are free to marry and properly disposed. The wedding date can only be set *after* the couple has filled-out the pre-nuptial inquiry (viz. the forms delineated in statute 11) and thereafter obtained approval from the pastor.

11.

The pre-nuptial inquiry is provided for in the *MA*, *MB*, and; if applicable, *MC₁* (disparity of cult) or *MC₂* (mixed marriage) forms provided by the Office of the Chancellor. The most up-to-date forms must be used; forms should be found on, and printed from, the Colorado Springs Diocesan Website, Office of the Chancellor, as needed. Old versions of forms are not to be used.

12.

Regarding the *MA* form, the prospective bride and groom must be interviewed individually by the pastor (cf. statute 8), or his cleric delegate when extraordinary circumstances necessitate, so as to allow complete freedom in each of his or her responses.

13.

In order to ascertain the prospective spouses' freedom to marry, the following must be acquired:

1§ For all Catholic parties:

1° A recently issued (meaning, dated within six months) baptismal certificate with sacramental notations.

2° One '*Freedom to Marry: Witness Testimony*' (i.e. *MB* form). This witness must be over 18 years of age and has known the party for at least 14 years.

2§ For all non-Catholics (baptized or non-baptized):

1° If Christian, proof of baptism is to be demonstrated by way of certificate, letter, or affidavit.

2° Two '*Freedom to Marry: Witness Testimony*' (i.e. *MB* form). These witnesses must be over 18 years of age and have known the party for at least 14 years.

2) **Marriage Preparation Classes:**

(obligatory)

The goal of marriage classes during this proximate phase of preparation is to inform and enrich couples in the meaning of natural or Christian marriage and their proper roles as spouses. By way of this catechesis in the theology of marriage, the parties are to be better disposed to the available graces and better aware of the obligations associated with the state in life they will soon enter. These required preparation classes, which ought to touch upon both natural and sacramental marriage depending upon the concrete situation of a given couple, can be conducted in a variety of ways: at the parish level, at the Diocesan level, or online.



14.

1§ At the parish level, these classes can be conducted by the priest or deacon preparing the couple or by trained lay instructors, preferably a married couple. The training of lay instructors is under the responsibility of the Office of Marriage and Family Life. The pastor of a given parish is to see to it that the program(s) used at his parish cover the content listed below (cf. statute 15)

and are duly approved by the Diocese of Colorado Springs, viz. the Office of Marriage and Family Life in conjunction with the Office of the Chancellor.

2§ At the Diocesan level, these classes are facilitated through the Office of Marriage and Family Life which works in conjunction with *Agapè Catholic Ministries*; links to *Agapè Catholic Marriage Preparation* can be found on the Diocesan Website.

3§ Other marriage preparation classes, be they in-person or online, are permitted to fulfill this preparation requirement as long as they cover the content listed below (cf. statute 15) and are approved beforehand by the Office for Marriage and Family Life in conjunction with the Office of the Chancellor.

4§ The following programs of marriage preparation classes do not fulfill the Diocesan requirements:

- 1° Anything fewer than three sessions (each one a full hour in length), and single day or single weekend condensed classes. Such do *not* provide sufficient time to satisfactorily cover or internally process the required material as listed in statute 15.
- 2° Solely video-based programs. Such video based programs can be used to compliment other approved programs, but they cannot replace them.

15.

In order for marriage preparation classes to satisfy this requirement in marriage preparation, they must present the following materials to the couple preparing for marriage:

- The divine institution of marriage (natural and sacramental)
- Sacramental and doctrinal aspects of marriage:
 - The goods of marriage: indissolubility, unity/fidelity, openness to life
 - Encyclical Letter *Humanæ Vitæ* by St. Paul VI
 - Theology of the Body by St. John Paul II
 - Church teachings on Marriage (Catechism of the Catholic Church)
 - Premarital chastity
 - Participation in the Sacraments (Confirmation, Penance & Holy Eucharist)
- Ability to give consent (free from all psychological and volitional incapacities)
- Freedom from all impediments
- Prayer as a couple and a family
- Child rearing
- Role of the family in Church and society; parents' role as primary educators
- Communication skills; conflict resolution
- Christian ways to handle money, tithing, et al.

3) Natural Family Planning Classes:

(obligatory)

16.

1§ Couples are required to complete Natural Family Planning (NFP) classes as a part of their pre-marital preparations; this typically takes three months to complete. These classes are led by

trained instructors; the Office for Marriage and Family Life is to provide direction to parishes on where and when approved local area courses are offered. Unofficial NFP classes at the parish level are not adequate substitutions without the written permission of the Chancellor.

2§ If there is good reason to seek dispensation for this requirement (e.g. the woman is post-menopausal), only the Diocesan Bishop or his delegate (i.e. the Chancellor) can grant dispensation. A letter detailing the situation and pursuant of the favor is to be sent to the Chancellor. It should be noted that even should a couple be desirous to accept all children they are blessed with and not worry about when they come, completion of NFP classes is still required.

17.

1§ The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops provides a list of approved NFP providers, including distance learning methods and Spanish language programs. The programs most used in this Diocese include:

- 1° Couples to Couples League (C.C.L.), the *Sympto-Thermal Method*
- 2° St. Paul VI Institute, the *Creighton Model Fertility Care System*
- 3° Colorado NFP, the *Marquette Model*
- 4° BOMA-USA, the *Billings Ovulation Method*
- 5° The Diocesan Office for Hispanic Ministry facilitates in-person Spanish language classes at least twice a year at St. Mary's Cathedral in Colorado Springs.

2§ In-person or live sessions are preferred. However, for couples who live in the more remote plain or mountain parishes, live in different cities/states, or have different work schedules, approved on-line programs are available. Pastors should only allow the substitution of these programs when completion of preferred programs is impossible or genuinely inconvenient. Such a program is found with the *Sympto-pro Fertility Education* (symptopro.org). However, single session programs such as NFP Life offered by The Marriage Group are not approved and do not fulfill diocesan requirements.

4) Pre-Nuptial Inventory and Its Review:

(obligatory)

The goals of this step are to:

- Facilitate the Pre-Nuptial Inventory
- Over several sessions, review the results of the Pre-Nuptial Inventory with the couple.
- Affirm the unique gifts each party brings to the relationship and help the couple address any 'problem' areas that the inventory brought forward.
- Discuss the issue of cohabitation or premarital sex, if it has not yet surfaced in the preparation process.

18.

The FOCCUS (*Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study*) inventory, or its equivalent (e.g. Prepare/Enrich, Fully Engaged), is to be administered at this time by a priest, deacon, or a trained lay facilitator. The couple preparing for marriage is to complete the inventory individually.

19.

1§ Review sessions of this pre-nuptial inventory can be facilitated by the priest or deacon preparing the couple (if properly trained) or by a lay trained minister. At the discretion of the priest or deacon who has assisted the couple thus far, a **properly trained** ‘mentor couple’ can also conduct these sessions. In order to qualify as a ‘mentor couple’, the husband and wife must be trained by a Certified FOCCUS Facilitator (cf. <http://www.foccusinc.com/training-become-a-facilitator.aspx> for more information) or complete the training offered through either Prepare/Enrich (cf. <https://www.prepare-enrich.com> for more information) or through Fully Engaged (cf. <http://www.getfullyengaged.com/facilitators/training-opportunities/>).

2§ Three sessions for this review are recommended; the precise number of sessions needed for an individual couple is to be determined by the trained facilitator(s) in agreement with the pastor.

3§ The use of properly trained ‘mentor couples’ is highly encouraged. The experience of established married couples who are actively living their faith and practicing NFP, provides an invaluable witness for the engaged couples. If pastors use their assistance, this review can be done in the mentor couple’s home over the course of a number of meetings, as needed.

20.

After the Pre-Nuptial Inventory has been reviewed, the facilitator (priest, deacon, or properly trained ‘mentor couple’) must complete the *MD* form provided by the Office of the Chancellor:

- 1° The completion of this form must make use of complete sentences and provide sufficient explanations. Forms with blank sections or one word answers will not be accepted.
- 2° If a properly trained ‘mentor couple’ conducts the abovementioned review, the priest or deacon who is preparing the couple must confirm that this *MD* form has been properly completed. The same priest or deacon must sign the final page.

21.

1§ Upon review of this *MD* form, the preparing priest or deacon must assess the general readiness of the couple to proceed. The priest or deacon, consulting with the pastor, decides whether to move forward with the anticipated date for the marriage, or to postpone the marriage until the engaged couple has taken the action(s) required (for example therapy in case of addictions to alcohol, drug, pornography, sex; counseling in case of lack of maturity, psychological or emotional disorders, etc.).

2§ It is the responsibility of the pastor to explain to the engaged couple that some issues, if not addressed properly, may result in the invalidity of any attempted marriage.

5) **Engaged Encounter Weekend or equivalent:** (optional)

22.

Couples are encouraged to partake in a weekend program to better prepare for their new life together. The program chosen can be Engaged Encounter Weekend or equivalent, such as a parish based program; a template for parish based retreats is found on the diocesan website, under the Office for Marriage and Family Life. The cleric doing the marriage preparation is to strongly encourage the engaged couple to attend this weekend program. However, if a good reason exists, the pastor has the prerogative to waive this step in the marriage preparation on a case by case basis.

6) **Final Meeting:** (obligatory)

23.

1§ No later than *one month* prior to the scheduled wedding date, the pastor and the priest or deacon facilitating the marriage preparation is to meet one last time with the couple. If the marriage is taking place outside of the Diocese of Colorado Springs, please note the alternate timetable seen in statute 5 of this document for transmitting marriage files to the Office of the Chancellor. At this meeting, the pastor and assisting cleric must ensure that the marriage file is complete; this means baptismal certificates are present, all diocesan forms completed, dispensations/permissions (if applicable) granted, and certificates for the completed programs in hand.

2§ Additionally, this same pastor needs to make sure that all preparation for the actual nuptial ceremony has been duly conducted. To see that all details are covered (e.g. liturgical choices, reading selections, music arrangements, et al.) he may ask for the assistance of other clerics, parish staff, and parishioners.

The qualified witness needed for Canonical Form

24.

1§ If the wedding is being officiated by a cleric other than the local Ordinary or the pastor of the place (cf. can. 1108 §1), delegation to a different cleric must be given *in writing* (MA form, top of page 3). A cleric who claims to possess said delegation has the onus of proving said delegation (cf. can. 131 §3). Pastors are reminded that this delegation touches upon validity; failure to delegate a cleric to witness a marriage within his parish boundaries results in an invalid exchange of marital consent.

2§ Parochial vicars are hereby granted the delegated general faculty (cf. can. 1111) to witness marriage consent within the boundaries of the parish to which they are assigned as well as the faculty to delegate specific clerics within the parish boundaries.

3§ Deacons are hereby granted the delegated general faculty (cf. can. 1111) to witness marriage consent within the boundaries of the parish to which they are assigned; deacons cannot delegate this faculty.

4§ Additionally, the Chancellor of the Diocese of Colorado Springs, in accordance with can. 1111, enjoys the ability to grant faculties to any cleric to witness marriages within the territorial boundaries of the Diocese of Colorado Springs.

Determining the type of celebration

The Catholic Church throughout her history and doctrine has proclaimed the sanctity of marriage both in its natural and sacramental reality. This reality is presented, not only within Catholic theology, but also in the liturgy and diverse forms of celebration. To avoid any kind of confusion on the part of Christ's faithful, the principles provided below are to be followed within the Diocese of Colorado Springs when determining what form needs to be followed for the celebration.



25.

For marriages between two Catholics:

1§ Regarding place:

- 1° The marriage of two Catholics must be celebrated in a Catholic church or chapel within the parish boundaries of either the bride or the groom.
- 2° If the marriage is to be celebrated in a different parish within the Diocese of Colorado Springs, the proper pastor is to sign the section titled: '*Permission for Parishioner to be Married in Another Parish*' on page three of the MA form.
- 3° If the marriage is to be celebrated in a different diocese, all the needed permissions (viz. can. 1115) are granted by the Diocesan Bishop or his delegate (i.e. the Chancellor) in the issuing of the *visum est*.
- 4° No dispensation will be given to have the marriage ceremony outside of a Catholic church, chapel, or oratory except in extraordinary circumstances (e.g., the inability of either or both parties to come to a church).

2§ Regarding form:

Canonical form must be followed (can. 1108), which is:

- 1° Consent must be requested by the local Ordinary, pastor, or a delegated priest/deacon
- 2° Consent must be freely given before this priest or deacon, and a least two witnesses.
- 3° Consent must be spoken using the present tense.
- 4° Both parties must be present simultaneously.

3§ The liturgical form provided in the approved liturgical books of the Roman Rite must be observed; this includes the exchange of consent. The parties are not free to write their own so-called ‘vows’. Unity candles, mixing of sand, and all other non-liturgical insertions are not allowed at the marriage ceremony, be it within Mass or outside of Mass (this does not extend to the bringing of flowers to Our Lady or other like legitimate customs rooted in genuine Catholic devotion; the Office of Worship should be contacted with questions).

26.

For marriages between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic (i.e. Mixed Marriage):

It is forbidden by law (can. 1124) for a Catholic to marry a baptized non-Catholic. Permission for mixed marriage is required, following the prescriptions detailed in can. 1125, otherwise the marriage is illicit (although not invalid). A completed *MC*₂ form must be submitted to the Office of the Chancellor.

1§ Regarding place:

- 1° The marriage must be celebrated in the parish church of the Catholic party, or in another Catholic church or oratory. The norms above (cf. statute 25, 1§ above) pertaining to place must be followed.
- 2° Dispensation from location can be granted by the local ordinary or his delegate (i.e. the Chancellor).

2§ Regarding form:

- 1° Canonical form, as detailed above (cf. statute 25, 2§ above) is to be followed. If a dispensation from place has been granted (or is being sought), the canonical form may also be dispensed. When the dispensation from canonical form is granted, a priest or deacon may be present at the marriage ceremony, but may not be the official witness of the marriage nor preside at the ceremony.

3§ When canonical form is not dispensed, ordinarily, the marriage is celebrated without Mass²; the appropriate liturgical form provided in the liturgical books of the Roman Rite is to be observed.

27.

For marriages between a Catholic and a non-baptized (i.e. Disparity of Cult):

1§ It is forbidden by law (can. 1086) for a Catholic to marry a non-baptized person. In cases where there is moral certitude that the faith of the Catholic party is not endangered, the local ordinary, or his delegate (i.e. the Chancellor), may dispense from this impediment, following the

² Cf. THE ORDER OF CELEBRATING MATRIMONY, *Introduction* 36: “If a Marriage takes place between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic, the rite for celebrating matrimony without Mass (nos. 79-117) should be used. If however, the situation warrants it, the rite for celebrating Matrimony within Mass (nos. 45-78) may be used, with the consent of the local Ordinary [...]”.

prescriptions detailed in can. 1125. A completed *MC₁* form must be submitted to the Office of the Chancellor.

2§ If such dispensation is given, then the celebration is to take place in the parish church of the Catholic party or another Catholic church or oratory and canonical form is to be observed. The exchange of consent is to be done outside of Mass, according to Chapter III of the marriage rite: *The Order of Celebrating Matrimony between a Catholic and a Catechumen or a Non-Christian*.

3§ Dispensation from location can be granted. In this case, the canonical form may also be dispensed from; however, no priest or deacon may request the consent or officiate at the ceremony. This dispensation will not be granted if the ceremony will take place in a way contrary to the Church's teaching or is otherwise offensive to the faith.

28.

Marriages between two baptized non-Catholics:

1§ Non-Catholic Christians are not obliged to follow canonical form. Therefore, any public and law binding marriages are considered valid by the Catholic Church if the couple were free to marry and had no other impediments. After such a person's conversion to the Catholic Faith, there is to be no 'convalidation' or blessing of their marriage. This is a valid and sacramental marriage from the beginning.

2§ If such a person is a part of the RCIA program and not yet married, but is engaged to a Catholic, it is most advisable that the couple marry before the candidate enters the Catholic Church. Permission for a mixed marriage is still needed for the priest or deacon to proceed with the marriage of a candidate for full communion with the Catholic Church, provided that appropriate preparation has taken place. The norms concerning place and canonical form apply unless dispensations are granted.

29.

Marriage between two non-baptized persons (or one baptized, one non-baptized):

1§ Non-baptized persons, like baptized non-Catholics, are not obliged to canonical form. Therefore, any public and law-binding marriages are considered valid by the Catholic Church if the couple were free to marry and had no other impediments. After their conversion to the Catholic Faith, there is to be no 'convalidation' or blessing of such a marriage. This is a non-sacramental, but valid natural marriage.

2§ If such a person is a part of the RCIA program and not yet married, but is engaged to a Catholic, it is most advisable that the couple marry before the catechumen enters the Catholic Church; this is to ensure that the person converts to the Catholic faith for the right reasons. Dispensation for disparity of cult is needed for the priest or deacon to proceed with the marriage of a catechumen, provided that appropriate preparation has taken place. The norms concerning place and canonical form apply unless dispensations are granted.

Retained Marriage File at Parish

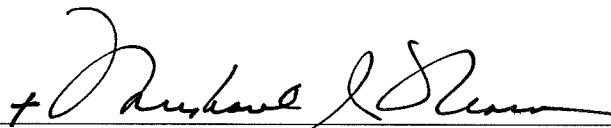
30.

After the wedding, the completed marriage file is to be retained permanently at the parish where the marriage takes place. A completed marriage file is to contain the following documentation:


- a) **Visum** from the Diocese (i.e. Chancellor)
- b) **Cover letter** from Pastor requesting *visum* from the Chancellor.
- c) **MA form** (signed by both parties; any required delegation given *in writing*)
- d) **Baptismal certificate** of the Catholic party (groom first, if both are Catholic)
- e) **MB form** for Catholic Party (groom first, if both are Catholic)
- f) Any and all declarations of nullity/letters lifting restrictions/Death certificates for all previous spouses of Catholic party
- g) **Baptismal certificate** of other party
- h) **MB form(s)** of other party (two are needed if party is not Catholic)
- i) Any and all declarations of nullity/letters lifting restrictions/Death certificates for all previous spouses of other party
- j) Copy of **MC form** (if mixed marriage or disparity of cult)
- k) **Rescript** for Dispensation or Permission (if MC form was required)
- l) Catholic Marriage Prep **Certificate**
- m) PMI **Certificate** (if one is given; the actual pre-marital inventory is to be destroyed)
- n) **MD form**: signed by facilitators and cleric
- o) NFP **Certificate** (if dispensation is obtained, a copy of the request letter included w/ Rescript)
- p) **ME form** (or file copies of notification letter)

This General Decree is to be observed by all members of the faithful in the Diocese of Colorado Springs. In accordance with canons 7, 8, and 29 of the Code of Canon Law, the laws set out in this general decree come into force following a one month *vacatio*.

Promulgated at the Chancery of Colorado Springs on the third day of October in the year of our Lord Two Thousand Nineteen.



Most Reverend Michael J. Sheridan, S.T.D.
Bishop of Colorado Springs


Rev. Msgr. Ricardo Coronado-Arrascue, J.C.D.
Chancellor

