

## Marriage Preparation is in three parts

For a couple preparing to marry it is important for them to explore their relationship and develop the skills needed to handle the challenges that inevitably arise when people share their lives. This unique relationship is a work in progress, a never ending journey of discovery. The Church wants to assist you in this process.



### 1. Meet with your priest

The priest who will receive your vows will provide part of your marriage preparation instruction. He will also complete the necessary papers and talk to you about what will be required in terms of marriage preparation.

### 2. Inventory

The inventory is an introduction to marriage preparation and is coordinated at a diocesan level.

An inventory of statements called 'Commit' is facilitated by a trained couple or priest. You will meet with the facilitating couple in their home and use this very useful tool to discover your areas of strength and areas you may need to work on.

The primary objective of Commit is to provide a communication assessment for couples preparing

to marry. There are 144 statements altogether that each person responds to individually.

The Commit inventory covers a broad range of relationship areas.

There is a cost of \$40 which goes towards materials and training.

Commit takes on average two to three evenings.

*Information can be found at  
[www.chch.catholic.org.nz/commit](http://www.chch.catholic.org.nz/commit)*

*The coordinator for Commit is  
Therese Roughan  
email [roughan@xtra.co.nz](mailto:roughan@xtra.co.nz)  
phone (03) 351 8002*

### 3. Marriage Preparation Courses

Marriage preparation courses in the Christchurch Diocese are run at a parish level.

Parishes use various marriage preparation programmes.

The marriage preparation programmes are held over 5-7 evenings and are topic based, covering one topic each evening. These topics are presented by married couples and often the parish priest as well. Couples will present material on various topics, such as:

- ~ Family of Origin
- ~ Sacrament of Marriage
- ~ Communication
- ~ Dealing with Conflict
- ~ Sexuality as Gift
- ~ Sharing our Values
- ~ Financial Issues

The material presented is designed to be skills based and educational.



## Supporting Courses on Theology of the Body

### Good News about Sex and Marriage

This course comprises one evening that explores the 'why' behind the 'what' of the Catholic teaching about our sexuality. The material draws strongly on Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body.

There is a suggested donation of \$30 per couple.

### What Am I Saying "I DO" To?

This course provides an introduction to the "Theology of the Body" for engaged couples.

The input of the course is by DVDs and then opportunities for each couple to have time alone to discuss and share, with no formal group sharing.

The suggested donation is \$60 per couple.

Both courses are held at John Paul II Centre for Life  
88 Idris Road, Bryndwr, Christchurch.

For more information  
please phone 03-351 3225 or email [info@jp2.org.nz](mailto:info@jp2.org.nz)



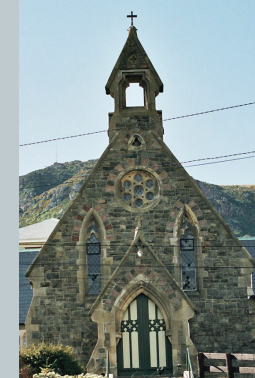
More information can be found at  
[www.chch.catholic.org.nz/preparingforyourwedding](http://www.chch.catholic.org.nz/preparingforyourwedding)  
and  
[www.catholicmarriagenz.org.nz](http://www.catholicmarriagenz.org.nz)

## Preparing for *Your Wedding* in the *Catholic Church*



*"And now these three remain:  
faith, hope, and love.  
But the greatest of these is  
Love"*

1 COR 13:13





Congratulations on your up-coming marriage. The Church rejoices with you, and wants your wedding day and married life to be richly blessed. The following notes are provided to assist you in your planning.

## What's First?

We ask that you make contact with the priest whom you want to have officiate at your wedding as soon as possible and at least six months prior to the wedding.

Whether you are active in your faith at the moment or not, the first person you should see is your local parish priest. Be assured that you will receive a warm welcome.

Your priest will arrange a preparation course for you which is appropriate to your needs. Usually this involves married people and the priest officiating. As well, there are some forms to be filled out, and the ceremony to be planned.

## Special Circumstances

Because the marriage rites have such special significance for us, the Catholic Church asks all Catholics to celebrate their marriage in the Catholic Church.

In special circumstances you can seek from the bishop a dispensation from the usual form of marriage. For example, if your fiancé's family are active in another Christian denomination, you may decide you want to be married in your fiancé's church.

## Marrying Overseas

If you are planning to exchange your vows in another country, please make contact with your local priest. He will assist you with a marriage preparation course and organise the Church's paperwork to be sent to the place where you are marrying. The local Church in many overseas countries can be very strict about proper procedure, and so early contact with your local priest to attend to these matters is important.

## Starting Again

If you or your fiancé have previously attempted marriage, and this has ended in a civil divorce, you may be wondering where you stand in the eyes of the Church. In such a painful situation, and after the example of Christ, the Church desires to walk with you and assist you in this sensitive area.

The Church has processes which carefully and respectfully assess the validity of any previous union. The healing of past hurts and anxieties becomes a vital first step for moving on.

We encourage you to have a talk in confidence with your priest about your situation.



## Returning Home

You may be reading this having already been married outside the Church. If you wish to look into having your marriage blessed so that you can receive Holy Communion again, have a talk with your parish priest. He will be happy to receive you.

## The Ceremony

The wedding ceremony can be either a nuptial Mass or a wedding service. The use of sacred music and scripture readings points to the heart of Christian marriage. Your wedding is a sacred commitment between yourselves and God who calls you to a faithful and life-giving love for the rest of your lives. We believe that God speaks directly to us through the music and words used in the marriage liturgy. So these elements of the ceremony take on a special importance.

## The Place of Marriage

The place of marriage contributes significantly to the special nature and dignity of the celebration. The normal place for a wedding is your local parish church. This is where the parish family gathers for baptisms, funerals, weddings and especially the Sunday Mass. The church is the house of God, the most fitting place for such a sacred commitment.

In exceptional circumstances you may request permission to marry in another setting. Talk to your priest celebrant who will work with you on this.

## Finally

The journey to your wedding day becomes an important starting point for your life together as a married couple. You have much to think about as your big day approaches. Remember that what you are doing is preparing not just for a special day, but for the whole of your life together. The Church rejoices with you both and joyfully accompanies you over the coming months.

## Catholic Marriage

Faithful to the teaching of Jesus Christ, we believe that marriage is:

- ~ Exclusive
- ~ Life giving
- ~ Permanent
- ~ Between a man and a woman

Marriage mirrors the faithful love of God for his people. At your wedding you will make a commitment to love each other for better or worse, in sickness and in health. Thus the decision you make to marry is a very important one, because it is a life-long commitment. The preparation, the forms to complete and the ceremony all assist the couple to prepare for and appreciate what it is they are doing. With God's grace, their bond of love is blessed and strengthened.

