

Marriage preparation is ‘a gift’

When it comes to marriage preparation, the first place couples should turn is the church in which they are getting married.

“The parish may have a parish-based program, which they can attend,” said Lauri Przybysz, coordinator for marriage and family enrichment for the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Couples can also register for archdiocesan pre-Cana programs hosted by other parishes by contacting the Division of Evangelization and Catechesis at 410-547-5417. A schedule of pre-Cana classes can be found by visiting www.archbalt.org/marriage-family/preparation.

The parish may offer a group pre-Cana program, or it might be a sponsor couple, which is one-on-one. The fee is \$80 for archdiocesan programs, and according to Przybysz, the configuration of the program will be determined by the host parish.

“They are not all identical,” she said.

A third option is to attend the weekend program, Catholic Engaged Encounter. Couples can sign up by visiting www.mdcee.org.

“The ultimate judge of the acceptability of the program is the priest or deacon who will be marrying the couple and witnessing the vows,” said Przybysz.

She said all of the programs will cover the key topics known to be important for marriage preparation and some catechesis about the sacrament of marriage. Topics may include reflections on commitment, communication, children in the future and family life, skills in conflict resolution and the spirituality of the couple.

The programs will include some type of pre-marriage inventory designed to encourage communication within the couple.

“Many couples don’t understand that marriage prep is something beyond just the class,” Przybysz said. “It’s a whole process that includes meeting with the priest and deacon, preparing readings and also their own time of spiritual preparation.”

“It’s a gift, really, to have the opportunity to just step back and reflect on your future together,” Przybysz said. “I encourage couples to take this time as a retreat. It’s like preparing for a mission. “

Couples should begin looking into marriage preparation at a minimum of six months in advance – ideally a year.