



## Diocese of Lincoln Guidelines for the Marriage Catechumenate

The Diocese of Lincoln has updated its diocesan marriage preparation policy to implement the **Marriage Catechumenate** as called for by the **Dicastery for Laity, Family, & Life**. The chart below outlines **required practices** versus **recommended pastoral options** to guide parish implementation. These guidelines will go into implementation on **January 1st, 2026**.

<i>Diocesan Requirements</i>	<i>Notes / Clarification</i>
<b>Minimum Timeline: 6 months</b>	8-12 months is ideal; less than 6 months requires a dispensation.
<b>Engaged Encounter (EE) or Virtual Course as a substitute</b>	Couples should register and attend early for deeper discernment. If unable to attend in-person or if an exception occurs, the preparing priest may select from a list of approved virtual retreats.
<b>Pastoral Check-in (Post-Retreat)</b>	A brief check-in is offered post-retreat to reclarify Church teaching, and confirm readiness. In <i>Witness to Love</i> , this is Session 4: <i>Theology of Marriage Discussion Night</i> , with the mentors, engaged couples and clergy.
<b>Lay- Couple Accompaniment</b>	Pastor may choose method. Recommended options: <i>Witness to Love</i> mentor couples, or pre-marital inventory facilitator couples.
<b>Fertility Awareness Intro Course</b>	Intro Course is required; full course is strongly encouraged.
<b>Sacrament of Reconciliation (for Catholics)</b>	Confession prior to the wedding is recommended. Best practice is to offer it directly before or after the rehearsal.
<b>Pre-Marital Inventory</b>	A premarital inventory is required. FOCCUS is recommended, however may use <a href="#">any USCCB option</a> . Recommended: 1-6 sessions.
<b>Convalidations, Second Marriages, &amp; Special Circumstances</b>	In these cases, virtual or hybrid retreats may be used for the retreat requirement; however, a premarital inventory and lay accompaniment are still required to support pastoral care in more layered life and family situations.

<i>Flexible Recommendations</i>	<i>Notes / Clarification</i>
Rite of Presentation after Reception Stage Rite of Betrothal after Catechumenal Stage - “ <i>Order of Blessing an Engaged Couple</i> ”	Rites of entry are recommended between stages (e.g., Rite of Presentation after initial meeting, Rite of Betrothal after discernment is finalized (60 days before the wedding).
Marriage Formation Coordinator (Witness to Love only)	Essential for parishes with 5+ weddings/year; if there is less than five weddings, parish may use a virtual coordinator through <a href="#">Witness to Love Hybrid Experience</a> .
Couple’s Prayer with Engaged and Mentor Couples	Encourage engaged and mentor couples to pray together. See Appendix 3 of the policy.