



# Diocese of Lincoln

## *Convalidations, Second Marriages, Special Circumstances – Guide*

### **Formation Guidelines for Convalidations, Second Marriages & Special Circumstances:**

- A. **Standard Policy: Engaged Encounter** remains the standard retreat option.
- B. **Exceptions to the Standard Policy** (choose from the options on page 2):
- **Couples who should attend Engaged Encounter (if possible)**
    - Those married two years or less civilly
    - First-time sacramental marriage (i.e., at least one spouse has never been married in the Catholic Church)
  - **Couples who may select a virtual or hybrid retreat option if the pastor agrees it fits the criteria,**
    - Valid exceptions are:
      - Those living over 150 miles from OLGC Retreat Center (Waverly, NE)
      - Legitimate work conflict, illness, or childcare needs, mature or elderly couples, low-income, mental health exemptions, etc.
- C. **All convalidations and special circumstances still require:**
- **Lay couple accompaniment** (*Witness to Love Civil Marriage Initiative mentoring, choose a mentor to do the virtual retreat with you, or pre-marital inventory facilitator couples*). Ask your parish what model they use.
  - **A premarital inventory** (*FOCCUS Convalidations or another approved inventory*), may be waived for elderly couples or long-standing civil marriages at pastor discretion
  - **An NFP Intro Course** (*for all couples of fertility age*)
  - **Completion of an approved retreat or formation course** (*See page 2*)
  - **A brief Theology of Marriage “check-in”** with the priest after completion of retreat

### **Recommended Pathways for Convalidations & Special Circumstances:**

1. If your parish is using **Witness to Love**, complete the **Civil Marriage Initiative mentoring** with the **Be More Marriage Formation Retreat**. You will still need to complete a pre-marital inventory (i.e., FOCCUS Convalidations, inventory may be waived at pastor discretion) and a fertility awareness intro course, if of fertility age.
2. If you wish to do an all in one formation option, the best option is **The Marriage Group (Living Our Faith in Love)**. **With this option, the premarital inventory and NFP Intro Course are included. You will still need to use a lay accompaniment/mentoring component:**
  - a. Preferred Path: You may choose a mentor couple to walk through the retreat course (Living Your Faith in Love) with you, or ask the parish if they have mentors you can choose from.
  - b. Or you may do a self-paced, flexible pathway. Please ask your priest what they prefer.

## Approved Online & Hybrid Retreats/Courses

### 1. *Best Virtual Self-Paced Retreat Course - FREE*

- [Witness to Love: Be More Marriage Formation Retreat](#): (English & Spanish).
  - Free for anyone in the Diocese of Lincoln
  - Couples or clergy that are already registered with Witness to Love have automatic free access through the Witness to Love Dashboard (Learning Platform).
  - *Non-Witness to Love users: [complete the registration form](#) to request access.*

### 2. *Best All in One Formation (with Certificate) - Paid Option*

- [Marriage Group: Pre-Cana](#): *Self-led, flexible format, All-in-one formation (Pre-Cana, NFP, Premarital Inventory Included) \$199 (English & Spanish)*

### 3. *Other Options - Live or Self-Paced, Instructor-Led (with Certificate)*

- [Engaged Encounter Hybrid](#): *Live quarterly zoom retreat for those who can't attend in-person, Fri - Sun on Zoom. \$285. (English)*
- [Catholic Marriage Fellowship](#): *Ideal for urgent cases (less than 4 wks. before), live two-weeknights, \$110, or self-paced, \$150. (English)*
- [Joy-Filled Marriage](#): *Self-paced with live 2.5-hour discussion on Zoom - created by Christopher West, \$210. (English & Spanish)*
- [Agape Catholic Marriage Prep](#): *Self-led, instructor guided via written reflections; can be tailored for convalidations, military, bilingual, or second marriages; duration: 4-6 weeks (or 2 weeks in urgent cases). \$239-\$289. (French, Spanish, & English)*

### 4. *Virtual - Self-Paced Video (No Certificate)*

- [FORMED Beloved Series \(Parts 1 & 2\)](#) Free with a parish FORMED subscription. Part 1: *Catechesis*, (Sessions 1-6), Part 2: *Life Skills* (Sessions 1-6). Use the Leader's Guide for accountability. (English & Spanish)

### 5. *(No Technology Required and No Certificate) Vietnamese Option*

- [TOBET4Engaged](#): Hardcopy booklet and journal; Accountability through homework. \$19.99, bulk discounts available. (Vietnamese, Spanish, English)