OFFICE OF FAMILY LIFE & DISCIPLESHIP

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Diocese of Lincoln Guidelines *for the* Marriage Catechumenate

The Diocese of Lincoln has updated its marriage preparation policy to implement the **Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life** as called for by the **Dicastery for Laity, Family, & Life**. These guidelines are listed in the executive summary below, and are effective starting on **January 1st, 2026.**

DIOCESAN REQUIREMENTS	DETAILS
Minimum Timeline: 6 months for standard prep; varies for convalidations and special cases	8-12 months is ideal; less than 6 months requires a dispensation from the Chancellor for standard preparation. For convalidations and special cases, the timeline is variable case by case.
Engaged Encounter (EE) or Virtual Course as a substitute	Couples should register and attend at the earliest convenience for discernment. For exceptions who qualify, the preparing priest may select from a list of approved virtual retreats.
Pre-Marital Inventory	A premarital inventory is required; unless dispensed by pastor. May use any USCCB option. Recommended: 1-6 sessions.
Pastoral Check-in (Post-Retreat)	A brief check-in is offered post-retreat to reclarify Church teaching, and confirm readiness. In Witness to Love, this is Session 5*: Theology of Marriage Discussion Night,* with the mentors, engaged couples and clergy.
Lay- Couple Accompaniment	Pastor may choose method. Recommended options: *Witness to Love* mentor couples, or pre-marital inventory facilitator couples.
Fertility Awareness Intro Course	Intro Course is required; full course is strongly encouraged.
Sacrament of Reconciliation (for Catholics)	Confession prior to the wedding is recommended. Best practice is to offer it directly before or after the rehearsal.
Convalidations, Second Marriages, & Special Circumstances	Due to the variability of civil marriage cases and plurality of complex situations, the standard requirements for such cases is assessed by number of years married and level of spiritual maturity. Please refer to the **Convalidations & Exceptions Guide** for detailed guidance on preparation requirements.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICES	DETAILS
Rites of Entry	**Rites of entry are recommended between stages to support the catechumenal pathways (e.g., Rite of Presentation** after the Reception Stage**, Rite of Betrothal/** or "*Order of Blessing an Engaged Couple"* after Catechumenal Stage)
Spousal Prayer	**Encourage engaged and mentor couples to pray together as spouses.** See Appendix 3 of the policy for examples to distribute to couples.