

## **MARRIAGE PREPARATION at St. Anthony, Frankfort IL**

**Congratulations on your engagement! You have found the love of your life!** Marriage is a great gift from God. The sacrament of matrimony offers a stream of graces that you can draw upon for your whole life together. We know that marriage often includes many surprises that no one can anticipate. Here at St. Anthony we offer a marriage preparation program that helps you build your marriage on solid ground, rooted in Christ, so that when life's storms arrive, you have the strength to stand together through them and grow even more in love.

You are required to attend either an Engaged Encounter Weekend through the Joliet Diocese or our 5-week Pre-Cana series here at St. Anthony called 'One in Christ', although we strongly encourage you to attend both. The courses do not overlap, and the combination will help you more as a couple who is approaching a lifetime of love. We also strongly encourage you to take a course in Natural Family planning if you have not learned that simple science already.

**Engaged Encounter of the Diocese of Joliet:** Offered through the Joliet Diocese most months of the year, couples spend a weekend learning from a team of married couples and a priest, about how to communicate honestly and deeply about important issues regarding their future marriage. Topics include an assessment of the couples strengths and weaknesses, ambitions and goals, attitudes about money, sex, children, family and relationship to the church. Communication skill-building and personal reflection are the main focus on this enjoyable weekend. Engaged couples share privately with each other after each group presentation. Dates, registration forms and more information for this weekend to remember is available at [www.dioceseofjoliet.org/familyministry](http://www.dioceseofjoliet.org/familyministry) or at [www.engagedencounter.org](http://www.engagedencounter.org) Cost is \$150.

**"One in Christ" Pre-Cana Course at St. Anthony.** Our brand new five session multi-media marriage preparation program here at St. Anthony was developed by Fr. Thomas Aschenbrener at parishes in Lincoln Park and downtown Chicago. Led by married couples, this course helps you understand both the natural and supernatural dimensions of marriage. It answers questions such as "What does God have to do with our marriage?" What's the difference between a contract and a covenant? How can we communicate better? How do we find sexual fulfillment as the years progress? What are the five love languages, and which one does my fiancé read best? What are the rules for fair fighting? How do we plan our family? What are the four things you can do to guarantee a 97% success rate for your marriage when the current divorce rate is 50%? A young doctor and his wife, a nurse, teach some of the more intimate medical topics. The course concludes with a betrothal ceremony.

The next course is on Saturdays 2:00 – 4:30 PM February 20<sup>th</sup> to March 27<sup>th</sup> (make up day if anyone missed any.) If a majority of you are planning to attend the March 19-21 Engaged Encounter Weekend, we will skip that week's lessons and move them to the 27<sup>th</sup>.

Call the Adult Faith Formation Office at St. Anthony to register 815-469-6198. Cost is \$60, payable at the first session to St. Anthony Catholic Church.

## **Natural Family Planning: An important part of marriage preparation**

**Natural Family Planning is the best kept secret of our times.** Although many people don't understand NFP, the international statistics prove that it is the best family planning method for a successful marriage. The divorce rate for couples who use NFP is 3%, and the divorce rate for couples who use contraception is 50%. Why? Maybe because of the respect and communication, or maybe it's because of the graces that couples receive from following God's plan for couples. Many couples say it is the deep respect for one another and for life that grows when practicing NFP. The modern methods of NFP work to postpone or achieve pregnancy by pinpointing the 5-8 fertile days of the month.

God designed the marital act to be both life-giving and love-giving. In respect for the dignity and sacredness of the conjugal union, Natural Family Planning methods are the only methods which are morally allowed for Catholic couples. The modern methods of NFP are as effective as artificial methods when learned and used properly. They are ecologically and morally acceptable, and there is no harm done to the body or soul. It is best to learn the NFP during the six months of your marriage preparation time before your wedding day and honeymoon.

**Why take a Natural Family Planning Class?** You will be amazed as you learn how to read your daily signs of fertility, that you can't believe you didn't learn in biology class. You can plan your family in a loving and healthy way without harsh chemicals or barriers between you and your spouse. It is important to learn the delicacies of your daily fertility signs whether you are planning to avoid or achieve pregnancy.

Locally, we have three different types of courses for Natural Family Planning (NFP) available

**The Billings Method of Natural Family Planning (Ovulation Method)** is taught in two sessions at the St. Charles Borromeo Pastoral Center on the first and third Tuesdays of the month from 7-9 pm. Contact Karen Buchert for more information at 630-551-1712. Billings NFP Classes are also offered by instructor Lupita Sorich on the fourth Thursday of the month from 6-8 PM at Provena St. Mary's hospital in Kankakee, call 932-9275 to register.

**The Couple to Couple League** teaches the Sympto-Thermal Method in three lessons, one lesson each month; contact Christopher and Kristin Algin of Frankfort at 815-582-8583 to find out the local schedule. Home Study courses are also available at [www.ccli.org](http://www.ccli.org). The course includes materials that help you learn to read three daily fertility signs in a woman's body. It includes the scientific background, participation of the husband, couple support and an ongoing helpline.

**The Creighton Method of Natural Family Planning** assists the couple in recognizing the natural signs of fertility levels whether the woman has regular or irregular cycles, or no cycles at all. The method can be used to understand problem cycles, avoid pregnancy or achieve pregnancy. It also assists infertile couples with natural ways of conception. ([www.fertilitycare.org](http://www.fertilitycare.org)) Private classes are taught with the couple and one instructor. Contact parishioner Michelle Sullivan, 815-464-6557 who meets with the couples here at St. Anthony.