



the DIOCESE of EAST ANGLIA

SO GREAT A MYSTERY

PREPARING FOR MARRIAGE IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Welcome to marriage preparation in the Diocese of East Anglia! This programme is an extensive and comprehensive preparation for Catholic marriage.

For all queries please contact the Marriage and Family Life Coordinator:
Antonia Braithwaite mflcoordinator@rcdea.org.uk

The full course consists of both:

1. Four parish sessions in your local area, using the Diocese' own *So Great A Mystery* course, delivered by a local Priest, Deacon or lay person. This booklet offers a catechetical introduction to the sacramental nature of Catholic marriage. For these four sessions you need to contact your local Parish Priest.

and also

2. One full Saturday using the *Smart Loving* programme. This Saturday includes tea/coffee and refreshments, and offers a range of detailed exercises that you as a couple will work through, addressing: communication, household management, expectations, ways of loving, addressing the past, sacramentality, prayer, sexuality and more. This programme draws on relationship psychology, Catholic doctrine and Theology of the Body. These Saturday sessions are offered in different locations throughout the Diocese – feel free to choose the date/venue which works best for you.

[*Please book you place HERE*](#)

Once you have completed **both parts** of this preparation, you will be given a **certificate** that you can take to the Priest who is arranging your paperwork.

If you are unable to attend any preparation courses, either in your Parish or the Saturday Day, or have any other questions, please contact Antonia Braithwaite.

SATURDAY DAY DATES

November 19th 2022, Our Lady Immaculate & St Etheldreda, 14 Exeter Road, Newmarket, CB8 8LT

March 4th 2023, St John the Baptist Cathedral, Unthank Road, Norwich NR2 2PA

March 18h 2023, Our Lady Immaculate & St Etheldreda, 14 Exeter Road, Newmarket, CB8 8LT

April 22nd 2023, Sacred Heart & St Oswald, 933 Lincoln Road, Peterborough PE4 6AE

November 18th 2023, Our Lady Immaculate & St Etheldreda, 14 Exeter Road, Newmarket, CB8 8LT

Click [here](#) to book.

PAYMENT

Cost of Marriage Preparation - £95 per couple

Please see below for payment details.

If you have financial difficulties please contact Antonia.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What does marriage preparation in our Diocese consists of?

Marriage preparation consists of *both*:

- a. The So Great A Mystery course in your local parish (contact your local Parish Priest) and also
- b. One Saturday Day (click here to book this).

2. What is the cost of marriage preparation?

The cost is **£95** per couple. Please contact Antonia if you have financial difficulties
Please pay either by:

| <u>Bank Transfer</u> | <u>Cheque</u> |
|--|---|
| East Anglia Roman Catholic Diocese Trustee Natwest, City Branch, Norwich | Made out to: East Anglia Roman Catholic Trustee |
| Sort Code: 60-15-31 Account No: 08741697 | Please write: "MFL marriage prep" on the back, |
| Please make sure you include the reference ' <u>MFL Marriage PREP</u> ' and your <u>name</u> . | Post it to: Paul Wilson, 21 Upgate, Poringland, Norwich NR12 7SH. |

3. Can I attend either the course or the Saturday Day?

The full course consists of both the course and also the Saturday Day as they cover different topics. If you definitely can't attend one or the other please contact Antonia.

4. Do I have to attend the course before the Saturday Day?

No, they cover different topics so it doesn't matter which one you do first.

5. How do I book for the *So Great A Mystery* parish course?

These classes are done at a local parish level, so please contact your local Catholic parish church.

6. What if only one of us can attend the Saturday Day?

The Saturday Day consists of couple work which you both do together on the day, so it is vital that you both attend the Saturday Day together.

7. What if we are unable attend either the Saturday Day or the parish sessions?

If you are unable to attend any of the face-to-face courses offered by the Diocese, then please contact Antonia Braithwaite mflcoordinator@rcdea.org.uk

8. How soon before my wedding do I need to do the marriage preparation course?

You can attend a marriage preparation course any time about two years before your wedding. But please note that the official paperwork can only be dated a maximum of six months before your wedding date.

9. How soon before my wedding do I need to meet with the Priest to do my paperwork?

The Church paperwork which the Priest fills in for you cannot be dated more than six months before your wedding.

10. What happens once we have finished the marriage preparation course?

Once you have completed the marriage preparation course, you will receive a certificate, and you Parish Priest can finalise your paperwork.

Couples need to meet with their local Parish Priest in East Anglia to do their paperwork even if they are getting married elsewhere, as it is the responsibility of the Diocese where the couple live to do their documentation, not the Diocese in which they are getting married. The completed paperwork will then be sent to the Diocese where the couple are planning on getting married.



11. What paperwork do I need to have ready for the appointment with the Priest?

At the appointment with the Priest please ensure you each have the following documents with you: (NB: not all of these may be relevant to you).

Please note: originals copies only, no photocopies or scans. They do not need to be translated into English; the original language is acceptable.

- Marriage Preparation Certificate of Completion

- Passport/ID

- A cheque for £20 made payable to 'RC Diocese of East Anglia' (if needed. See questions below)

- Baptism certificate*

*This must be an original. It does not need to be translated into English. You will need to contact the Church where you were baptised and explain that you are getting married and ask them to issue you with a baptism certificate for marriage. This certificate should be dated a maximum of 6 months before your wedding date and it needs to indicate the date and place of baptism, whether or not you have been Confirmed as well as any details regarding previous marriages or ordination or religious vows.

- Pre-Nuptial Information Form (Click here to find PDF download)** **

** Fill in all your personal details but do not anything on this form. You will sign it in front of your Parish Priest.

- Statutory Declaration of Freedom to Marry Form *** (Click here to find PDF download)**

***Print off one copy each. This form needs to be completed before a Solicitor/Public Notary/Commissioner of Oaths. You need to Google a convenient one and make an appointment with any one of them. Then take the forms with you and your fiancé and you need to sign it in front of them.

NB: If you are already civilly married you do not need to complete this form. Also, if you are getting married abroad and are required to prove your legal freedom to marry in that country/ consulate/ embassy then that paperwork is sufficient.

- Annulment paperwork (if relevant)

- Legal marriage certificate (if you are already civilly married)

12. My fiancé was baptised in non-Catholic Church, does s/he need to obtain a baptism certificate dated six months before our wedding?

No. It would be ideal if they were able to get a certificate dated six months before the wedding confirming their baptism. But if they are unable to, then their original certificate from the day they were baptised will suffice even if it is many years old.

13. I am getting married outside this Diocese, can the Priest in that Church do my paperwork?

The Church norms are that the Diocese where you live is responsible for doing your paperwork. This will then be sent to the Diocese where you are getting married. So you should contact your local Parish Priest here in East Anglia to do your paperwork.

14. What happens at the appointment with my Parish Priest?

Once you have completed the marriage preparation course you will need to make an appointment with your Parish Priest or his Assistant Priest and take with you all the relevant paperwork listed in Question 11 above (this is vital!).

In front of the priest you then sign the Declaration at the bottom of Page 2 of the Pre-Nuptial Information Form, and if only one of you is a Catholic, then the Catholic must make the promise before the priest on the bottom of Page 3.

15. What is the process if I am getting married:

- in my local Catholic Parish here in East Anglia
- in another Catholic Church in East Anglia
- in another Catholic Church in England and Wales?

If you are getting married in your own Catholic Parish here in East Anglia then the signed paperwork stays with your Parish Priest (*unless you require a Dispensation or Permission, in which case he will send the paperwork to the Chancellor, and it will then be returned to the Parish Priest).

If you are getting married in a different Catholic Parish in the Diocese of East Anglia where you are not parishioners then your Parish Priest will grant permission for you to do so (page 4 on the Pre-Nuptial Form) and then send the paperwork to the Parish Priest in East Anglia where you intend to marry. (*unless you require a Dispensation or Permission, in which case he will send the paperwork to the Chancellor, and it will then be returned to the Parish Priest).

If you are getting married in a Catholic Parish outside of East Anglia, but within the Episcopal Conference of England and Wales, then your Parish Priest will grant permission for you to do so (page 4 on the Pre-Nuptial Form) and send your paperwork to the Chancellor, who will then send it directly to the parish where the marriage will take place.

NB: you will need to provide a £20 cheque made payable to 'RC Diocese of East Anglia' which you should provide to your Priest, which he will send to the Chancellor.

16. What is the process if I am getting married somewhere else in the world and not in England and Wales?

Once you have signed all the documents in front of your Parish Priest, he must send them all to the Chancellor including a £20 cheque which you should provide made payable to 'RC Diocese of East Anglia'.

The Chancellor will check all your documentation to see it is correct and deal with any Dispensations or Permissions that you require. He will then prepare a letter to the Chancellor in the Diocese where you are intending to marry, wherever that may be around the world.

All this paperwork will then be sent back to your Parish Priest in East Anglia with an accompanying letter and a special envelope to be used by a courier service. Your Parish Priest will then give the documents to you and you are to arrange for a courier to collect them.

The courier will provide you with a Tracking Number and then the Chancellor of the Diocese in which you will be married or a member of the Diocesan Curia will sign for it. It works beautifully so do not panic. Most couriers are able to deliver anywhere in the world within five working days. Once the paperwork has arrived at the Diocese where you will be married the Chancellor there will send it to the exact Parish where you will be married. We aim for the paperwork to arrive about 4 weeks before the wedding date

PLEASE DO NOT: Send the documents using the Postal Service. Once post leaves this country there is no way of assuring it will reach its destination on time (we have much experience of this happening!). It needs to be sent as a tracked delivery using a courier service (e.g. *DHL*).

PLEASE DO NOT: give the documents to relatives to deliver or try to take them personally yourself to the Diocese where you are getting marriage. We have had this happen and the documents will be rejected and refused by the receiving Diocese because they could have been interfered with. The documents are considered the **personal correspondence** of the Chancellor of East Anglia to the Chancellor in the receiving Diocese, so they must be couriered directly and not hand delivered.



17. What is the timescale for the paperwork?

The Priests will complete your paperwork only after you have completed your marriage preparation course.

If you are getting married abroad, we aim for it to arrive in the Diocese where you are getting married about one month before your wedding date.

18. I am marrying a non-Christian, do I need to an extra paperwork?

Your Parish Priest will need to seek a Dispensation from Disparity of Worship from the Chancellor, but he will arrange that when he meets with you. You don't need to prepare anything in advance.

19. I am marrying a non-Catholic baptized Christian, do I need to do extra paperwork?

The priest will need to seek Permission for you from the Chancellor of the Diocese, but he will arrange that at your appointment with him. You don't need to prepare anything in advance.

20. We are already civilly married, do we need to complete the Statutory Declaration of Freedom to Marry form?

No. Please bring your civil marriage certificate to the appointment with the Priest.

21. We have already completed a Statutory Declaration of Freedom to Marry form in a different country/embassy/consulate, do we need to do another one here?

No, that will be acceptable. Please bring it to the appointment with the Priest.

22. What is the earliest I can see the Priest?

Maximum of six months before the wedding once you have completed the preparation course and have your certificates and paperwork ready.

23. We are from the Syro-Malabar Rite, do we need to do any extra paperwork?

No

24. I have been previously married but have now divorced and received an annulment. Do I still fill in the Declaration of Freedom to Marry form?

Yes, but write on the form that you have received an annulment.

Make sure you bring your annulment paperwork with you to the appointment with the Priest.

25. I was previously married but now my spouse is deceased.

If there has been a previous spouse, who is now deceased, the priest will need a copy of their death certificate.

26. I would like to be Confirmed, how can I go about organising that?

It is a good thing to be Confirmed and you are encouraged to be confirmed before your wedding if possible. Contact your Parish Priest as soon as possible to speak to him about that.

For all other questions, please contact Antonia Braithwaite

mflcoordinator@rcdea.org.uk

*God bless you on your wedding day and for your
future marriage!*

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