



Parish Family Life Coordinator Manual

2017

Table of Contents

Introduction and Overview.....	2
Marriage Preparation.....	4
Marriage/Family Enrichment.....	6
Natural Family Planning and Infertility.....	10
Separated/Divorced.....	12
Remarriage/Annulment.....	13
Pornography.....	14
Bereavement.....	17
Singles.....	18
Appendix.....	19

FLC = Family Life Coordinator

FLA = Family Life Apostolate

Introduction

Thank you for your service as your Parish's Family Life Coordinator! Archbishop Aymond and the staff of the Archdiocesan Family Life Apostolate wish to thank you for your generous service to the people of your parish.

The Parish Family Life Coordinator is an essential ingredient of the Archdiocese's renewed commitment to marriage and family life ministry. Through your work, along with the efforts of your colleagues in parishes across the Archdiocese and in collaboration with the Archdiocesan Family Life Apostolate, you will be helping to restore a culture of life and love where it matters most.

Your Role

As the Parish Family Life Coordinator (FLC), you will work with your pastor and other parish ministry leaders to *promote* and *coordinate* Marriage and Family efforts in the parish. The goal of this role is to facilitate opportunities for families in your parish to experience God's love and mercy in the context of their relationships and their homes, and to provide credible witness to it. The work of the FLC is an extension of the pastor's ministry and operates with his direction and supervision. It will be very important, therefore, to establish and maintain strong lines of communication with your pastor, deacons, and other ministry leaders in your parish.

The Family Life Apostolate (FLA) is the office in the Archdiocese that carries out the Archbishop's ministry to the families of the Archdiocese, especially through the structure of the parishes. The FLA provides resources and support for marriage preparation and enrichment, help for hurting marriages and families and those who have experienced divorce or separation, resources for parenting, and other family enrichment resources. We want to help you and your parish be successful in bringing about a genuine renewal of the culture of the family. You can find our email address and phone number at the bottom of every page of this manual, and we also highly suggest being in contact with the other FLC's in the parishes near you for ideas and support.

This Manual

This manual outlines the vision and the various aspects of ministry to marriages and families and provides an overview of the resources available to you from the FLA. (The manual is available in PDF format on our website; click the “Parish Family Life Coordinators” tab.) Not everything included here will be the best solution for your parish, however, nor is it meant to be a list of expectations for you. Each parish has its own unique culture, needs, and limitations. It will be your task, with the advice and guidance of your pastor and other ministry leaders in your parish, to develop a plan that responds to the unique needs and resources of your parish, and we are here to help you strategize. None of us can do this on our own!

The manual is broken into the eight major areas of marriage and family ministry:

- Marriage Preparation
- Marriage/Family Enrichment
- Natural Family Planning and Infertility
- Separated or Divorced
- Annulments and Remarriage
- Bereavement
- Pornography Prevention and Response
- Singles

Even if your parish is not able to currently provide a strong approach to each, a good understanding of these individual areas will help you form a well-rounded, more effective approach to ministry, no matter how small. The FLA will be focusing on each of these areas in detail during the regular meetings.

One final note: the FLC is a *coordinator*; the most effective ministries are the ones that invite and sustain participation from a wide range of people. As the Parish Family Life *Coordinator*, consider who you might invite to take responsibility for one or another aspect of the ministry and select the resources that are most compatible with their strengths. Do not assume that you must run these programs yourself. Your task is to get everyone rowing in the same direction, not to row the boat all alone!

Thank you, again, for your generosity to this ministry. We at the Family Life Apostolate believe that the establishment of FLC’s at every parish is an exciting opportunity for the Church to make a renewed and lasting impact on the marriages and families in our Archdiocese. We look forward to working closely with you and learning from you as we labor in His vineyard together!

Marriage Preparation

Marriage Preparation is a twofold endeavor: 1) to fulfill the Church's responsibility to administer the Sacraments prudently and faithfully and 2) to assist couples to both understand and embrace the Catholic vision of marriage so they may be properly disposed to receive the Sacrament. Put simply, the task is to help couples evaluate and strengthen their consent to marriage. We do this by providing the couples with a real and authentic vision of marriage and accompanying them on their journey to willingly embrace this calling.

FLC's should become familiar with the *Particular Law for Marriage Preparation* for the Archdiocese of New Orleans (particularly focusing on section 13.4). This document describes the requirements for Marriage Preparation in the Archdiocese. The FLC should work to ensure that their parish ministry helps couples seeking marriage to fruitfully fulfill the requirements of Archdiocesan Law. A concerted effort should be made to help avoid a sense of simply "jumping through hoops," both for the couples working through the process and for those who are responsible for guiding them. Parishes have a distinct advantage over Archdiocesan-based programs in this regard: a well-designed and executed parish marriage preparation process can provide a genuine spiritual home and valuable guidance for couples both before and after the wedding.

The new Archdiocesan particular law outlines how to approach the different marriage preparation program options that a pastor and a couple may consider. The policy instructs Pastors, Deacons, and marriage preparation ministers to *offer these programs in order of preference outlined in the policy*. (The policy is linked on the FLA website under the "Planning to Get Married?" tab.) The following is a brief description of those options:

Mentor Couple

As the name suggests, a parish mentor couple program pairs engaged couples with married couples in the parish to walk with them through the marriage preparation process. Mentor couple programs go a long way towards establishing a personal connection between the engaged couple and the parish and helps the marriage preparation program to respond to the particular needs of the engaged couple. Without a personal relationship, it can be very difficult for an engaged couple to truly internalize the information they receive in their preparation program. A parish mentor couple can also provide both post-wedding support and a personal bridge to getting involved in parish life. The Family Life Apostolate provides training and materials for two such programs in the Archdiocese: *In Home Marriage Preparation* and *Witness to Love*. There are other mentor couple programs, but they should be prayerfully discerned (the FLA can help with this) and approved by your pastor.

Engaged Encounter

Catholic Engaged Encounter is a community of married couples committed to providing weekend retreats for those preparing for the sacrament of marriage. Engaged Encounter retreats are held throughout the year and give couples an opportunity to reflect together on their relationship and teach communication techniques meant to foster a healthy married life. For more information about Catholic Engaged Encounter visit nocee.org. Registration is available on the FLA website.

Days for the Engaged

If neither a mentor couple nor the Engaged Encounter weekend are practically possible for the couple, the Archdiocesan-sponsored “Days for the Engaged” (DFE) workshops are offered. Couples attend two, day-long Saturday workshops: Part A covers life skills such as communication, conflict resolution, finances, time management, etc., and Part B covers the Sacramentality of marriage, sexuality, and Natural Family Planning. Both Part A and Part B must be completed for a certificate of completion to be given. Parishes may also elect to send couples to the Part B seminar as a supplement to their parish-based mentor preparation. Supplementing with the Part B workshop would be especially helpful for parishes that may find it difficult to recruit people qualified to present the more technical aspects of the Church’s teachings on marriage. It would allow mentor couples to process the Part B material with the engaged couple once they complete it rather than having to be the only source of this information. Registration for the Days for the Engaged is accessed online through the FLA website.

CatholicMarriagePrep.com

Finally, for couples who cannot attend any of the above marriage preparation programs, typically because of long-distance situations such as military deployments, off-shore assignments, or other circumstances, a high-quality online marriage preparation program is available at CatholicMarriagePrep.com. This allows couples to complete marriage preparation from a distance over the course of a few weeks with the help of a “mentor couple” who communicates with them via e-mail.

Special Situations

For couples who are entering a Sacramental marriage after a civil marriage (convalidations) or have been cohabiting for five years or more, the **Special Marriage** program, a one-day course, is offered (registration available on the FLA website), though a mentor couple would provide a much more thorough and personalized experience.

Couples who are re-marrying and have children from a previous marriage can attend a **Remarriage** course offered by the FLA, though, again, a mentor couple with some experience in this regard would be preferred.

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Marriage/Family Enrichment

The key to strengthening a parish is to strengthen families. It is in our families that we first learn who we are, what we are worth, who God is, and what it means to love. The key to strengthening families is to *strengthen marriages* since marriage is the source of the family and of each member's identity. (Unfortunately, we often only come to understand this reality once the family breaks down.) The good news here is that key is to strengthening marriages has been discovered: we must cultivate what St. John Paul II called "conjugal spirituality," meaning the couple's unity in the spiritual life, their *real* unity in Christ. This unified experience of God's powerful love and mercy strengthens the marriage more than anything else can, and this, then, brings about the changes we've been praying and working for in families and in parishes. *God working in families is both the goal we are trying to achieve through our ministry and the way by which we will achieve it!*

The resources and programs listed here are grouped by category for strategic planning:

One-time Events

Supper and Substance: A once- or twice-a-year couples' night that features a nice meal, well-decorated environment, and a good speaker. This is basically a date night with a faith-based speaker. It is an excellent first step for any family life efforts since it requires very little commitment, and the focus is not *completely* on faith formation. One step at a time!

Babysitting will double your numbers (at least!) and this will help many more young couples to attend. Talks should be testimony-based, and should ideally point to the next program you are soon offering for couples in your parish. Jason Angelette with Faith and Marriage at Willwoods is also an excellent resource for planning your next Supper and Substance (504-830-3716, jangelette@willwoods.org).

Speakers Bureau: A list of suggested local speakers is included in the Appendix with their contact information for a variety of marriage and family events (including Supper and Substance). Contact them well in advance since most of them are in high demand (because they are amazing!).

Golden Anniversary Celebration: The FLA hosts an Archdiocesan-wide Golden Anniversary celebration each year in June. Information is sent to parishes asking for a list of names of couples celebrating 50 years or more of marriage. Those couples are invited to attend the event at St. Philip Neri Church, and during the service (liturgy of the word), their names will be called, they will receive a certificate, and they will take a picture with the Archbishop. Many parishes also do their own 25th and 50th Anniversary celebrations, and the FLA can supply certificates for those, as well. The 2017 Archdiocesan celebration will be Sunday, June 11.

Retreats

Willwoods Faith and Marriage: See FaithandMarriage.org for dates and details. Usually, these are two-day couples' retreats held multiple times a year on the Southshore, the Northshore, and Bay St. Louis, MS. They provide excellent local speakers and fruitful experiences of prayer, dialogue, and play.

Domestic Church: Weekend retreats (starting Thursday night, ending midday Sunday) held throughout the year across South Louisiana (usually two or more in our area) for Sacramentally married couples. Materials are taken from *Domestic Church*, a lay movement that started in Poland with the help of St. John Paul II. The focus is conjugal spirituality, quality time with your spouse, and formation for sustainable spiritual growth at home. It can be a stand-alone retreat, or it can serve as an introduction to ongoing *Domestic Church* formation (more on this in "programs" below). There are also eight-day family retreats offered usually during the summer. See domesticchurchfamilies.com for more details and retreat dates.

Marriage Encounter: A long-standing institution that provides weekends for couples and focus on communication techniques, testimonies, and dialogue in the context of a prayerful retreat. Currently, the closest are held in Baton Rouge. See wwme.org.

Programs

Couple Prayer Series: Six-week series that helps couples overcome the obstacles to openly praying together on a daily basis. This might be the easiest and most fruitful way to help couples get a taste for conjugal spirituality or begin to really grow in it. You will need a presenting couple (mixture of live presentation and video) and a support couple, but all the videos and documents are given in a pack of DVD's, so it is cheap and simple to offer. Each participating couple is given seven envelopes to take home each week with excellent prayer guides for each day. This is a perfect next step after a Supper and Substance or a retreat. Those who participate will usually report deep and unexpected growth in intimacy and faith, and they are often open to further involvement and participation in parish life. See CouplePrayer.com.

United in Love, United in Christ: Six-week series written and produced by Jason Angelette in the Faith and Marriage Office at Willwoods that provides both formation in the Catholic understanding of marriage taken from the Theology of the Body as well as formation for the spiritual life of married couples. It focuses on topics such as prayer, the Sacraments, and forgiveness, and features testimonies from both local and nationally respected couples. See FaithandMarriage.org.

Domestic Church: *Domestic Church* started in Poland with the help of St. John Paul II to provide formation for Sacramentally married couples to grow in holiness *together* with their spouses and for this to provide the context for Christian growth in their families. It takes the rich spiritual tradition of the Church and directs it specifically to the married vocation for real,

sustainable growth. Couples begin, as mentioned above, with a couples' retreat, and then meet once a month in a group of 4-7 couples with a priest to process how the journey is going at home, pray together, and go over new formation materials. See domesticchurchfamilies.com or call David Dawson at the FLA for more information.

The Choice Wine: 9-part series written and produced by Steve Bollman and *Paradisus Dei*, who also produced the *That Man is You* program. It provides what it calls the “seven steps to a superabundant marriage,” which are extremely insightful and well-studied. *Paradisus Dei* is known for providing some of the best catechesis for the lay vocation, and they pair video presentations with small group discussions. See thechoicewine.org for more information.

Beloved: 12-part series produced by Lighthouse Catholic Media and the Augustine Institute for both married couples and engaged couples. It provides catechesis on the nature of marriage according to Catholic teaching, and uses well-produced videos paired with reflection and discussion guides for small groups. See lighthousecatholicmedia.org/beloved.

USCCB ForYourMarriage.Org: The U.S. Bishops' site for marriage and family resources. It includes excellent articles and videos on a large variety of topics as well as really good programming suggestions and other resources.

Struggling Marriages

Retrouvaille: A weekend retreat for couples in conflicted marriages. Focuses on very intentional communication, especially with difficult topics, in order to overcome deep-rooted sources of conflict and division. Call the FLA for registration information.

Catholic Counseling Service: Archdiocesan service that offers faith-based counseling at a reduced rate for married couples, families, or individuals. For appointments or questions, call 504-861-6245 or email ccs@arch-no.org.

Online and Phone Resources:

Marriage Disciples provides accompaniment and formation by a qualified couple somewhere in the country either over the phone or through Skype. MarriageDisciples.org.

The Pastoral Solutions Institute provides tele-counseling for couples and individuals by nationally respected Catholic counselors who are also trained in pastoral theology and Catholic teaching on marriage: CatholicCounselors.com

Family and Parenting

Family Prayer: Providing strategies, support, and resources for praying together as a family, in all its different stages, is central to any effort at enriching families. This is where each member most learns who God is, what prayer is, and how God responds to prayer. We are not aware of any parish programming specifically focused on family prayer, though many include

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materials as part of a larger family approach (Domestic Church, for example). The FLA is also constantly providing family prayer materials in the Clarion, on the Archdiocesan website, and in the Family Day materials (more on that below). Any effort to provide an event or events with families should include an experience of family prayer or at least some materials to promote family prayer, and the FLA can help with this.

Family Day: The fourth Sunday of September each year is our Archdiocesan Family Day. The FLA provides a theme and a packet with helpful materials for the Sunday liturgy, bulletin inserts/handouts, and other suggestions for the parish celebration. Many parishes host picnics, speakers, and other events, and the FLA can help with planning and connect you with parishes in your area who may already have something in place. Family Day 2017 will be Sunday, September 24.

Mother/Daughter, Father/Son Event: The FLA offers yearly events for mothers to attend with their daughters aged 10-12, and for fathers to attend with their sons aged 11-14. Presentations are given by a doctor and a woman/man trained to speak on the beauty of God's plan for our bodies as men and women. Reproduction and sexual development are the focus, and it provides parents with a comfortable, faith-based foundation in which to explain the act of intercourse and its role in marriage and conception to their child. These events are usually held in the Spring, and registration is done through the FLA. A few parishes host these events for their own parishioners, and this is certainly ideal for the sake of numbers, scheduling, and community building—the FLA can help strategize how to provide this in your parish.

Isaiah 43 Parenting and Mentoring Program: Isaiah 43 is a program offered by Catholic Charities of New Orleans which provides workshops for parishes that include resources, support, and networking for parents and grandparents. They address issues such as communication, discipline, encouragement, and forgiveness. Check out ccano.org/isaiah-43, or contact kgibson@ccano.org.

Single Parents: Those who are raising children on their own are usually overtaxed and very much in need of support from their community. However, their ability to show up to parish events or parent participation opportunities is often limited by their hectic schedules. So, efforts toward providing childcare for adult formation opportunities can be very helpful, and specific venues that offer connections with other single parents for support and strategizing would be much appreciated. The Isaiah 43 program (above) addresses issues faced by single parents and other varied family structures (grandparents raising grandchildren, etc.).

Natural Family Planning and Infertility

Our Archdiocese is blessed to have a very large and varied amount of resources for Natural Family Planning (NFP) and some of the best women's fertility and healthcare resources in the country. Our Catholic Charities also has a very well-organized and established adoption services department.

Engaged couples are now required as a part of their marriage preparation to receive a substantial introduction to NFP given by a certified instructor. This presentation includes medical information, a relational analysis of NFP usage versus contraception, and a moral and theological discussion about the gift of fertility and its vital connection to marriage, responsible parenthood, and prayerful discernment. These presentations necessarily include personal testimony and opportunities for follow-up discussions and further instruction.

For NFP instruction, presenters on the topic of NFP, and other resources, contact the FLA or one of the institutions listed below.

NFP Methods

Northwest Sympto-thermal: Uses a combination of basal body temperature and observation of physical changes to chart progress through the woman's fertility cycle. This information can be used effectively to either achieve or postpone a pregnancy. Classes are conducted in a group setting and consist of four, three-hour evenings spread over the course of two months. Available on both the Southshore and the Northshore. Registration is through the FLA office.

Creighton: The Creighton Fertility Care system uses observation of physical symptoms to both chart progress through the woman's fertility cycle and provide a wealth of information regarding the woman's health to a certified practitioner. This information can also be used by medical personnel trained in NaPro Technology, a cutting-edge healthcare system that works to maintain or restore a woman's natural reproductive system (local resources for this below). Classes are one-on-one with a practitioner and consist of an introductory presentation followed by monthly follow-up meetings until autonomy is achieved. Registration is through the Hope Fertility Care Center on the Southshore (womansnewlife.com/fertility/hope-fertility-care-center) and the Gianna Center on the Northshore (giannagulfssouth.org).

Family of the Americas: A method that is both simple and affordable, yet still very effective—it uses observation of physical symptoms to chart progress through the woman's fertility cycle. This method is said to be ideal for a woman discontinuing the use of artificial contraception. It is now available through the Hope Fertility Care Center, and one-on-one classes consist of an introduction and monthly follow-up meetings until autonomy is achieved.

Couple to Couple League: There are two instructor couples in the area for this symptothermal method, and they are both on the Southshore. Classes are three, pre-scheduled evening sessions done specifically couple-to-couple (imagine that!). Registration is online at ccli.org.

Infertility/Medical

The **Gianna Center** on the Northshore and **the Hope Fertility Care Center** on the Southshore work closely together to provide both Creighton Method NFP instruction and support as well as women's health and reproductive care. The Gianna Center now has two of only a handful of the certified NaPro surgeons in the country, using methods that are cutting-edge, extremely effective, and morally acceptable to restore or maintain a woman's natural fertility. The Hope Fertility Care Center also now has a general practitioner who is a medical consultant for NaPro technology and Creighton Fertility Care.

Taking Back the Terms uses testimonial as well as scientific talks and presentations on women's reproductive healthcare to inform and empower women with the tools and knowledge to understand how each woman's body is unique; with the goal of allowing her to make informed, healthy decisions with a doctor who understands her unique body as well. For more information, or to arrange a presentation check out their Facebook page or contact the FLA.

Adoption

Adoption Services of Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans is a full-service, non-profit, child-placing agency that offers domestic and international adoption. They provide services to both birthparents and families considering adoption. For birthparents, they provide legal, medical, and financial assistance through every stage; and for the adoptive parents, they provide application help, placement services, home studies, and post-adoption support. Information can be found at ccano.org/adoption.

Separated/Divorced

Since marriage affects us at the deepest levels of our identity and self-worth, the loss of marriage causes destruction at the deepest levels, and any effort at healing must take that into account as well as the effect on the children, friends, and other family members involved. Often, in an effort to uphold the dignity and indissolubility of marriage, those in the Church may hesitate to put sufficient energy into outreach to those who have experienced divorce. However, there are excellent approaches to providing fruitful healing while still recognizing the beauty and gift of Catholic marriage. We must, as the Body of Christ, reach out to those who are suffering so deeply and are often so isolated.

Beginning Experience: A weekend for those who have lost a spouse either through divorce or death. Provides peer support, healing, strategies for coping, and the option for long-term group support. These weekends are currently held in Rosaryville, near Pontchatoula, twice a year. The first retreat for 2017 has been scheduled for May 19-21.

Parish Programming

Keys to parish programming are as follows: well-facilitated group support, addressing the difficult dynamics of the divorce experience (parenting, court battles, loneliness, dating, etc.), working knowledge of the annulment process, foundation in Catholic teaching on marriage, and connection to counseling resources.

The Catholic's Divorce Survival Guide is a 12-week program published by Ascension Press and written by Rose Sweet, a nationally respected resource for the Catholic approach to divorce ministry. It leans heavily on the testimonies of many who share detailed stories of their struggles and how they found peace and healing, and they directly and faithfully address all of the particular issues listed in the paragraph above. The program and many great resources can be found at catholicsdivorce.com, and Rose Sweet is very accessible for all the support you might need. The FLA is also able to provide support for planning and implementation for this program.

Other well-respected parish programs are *Journey of Hope* from lisaduffy.com/parish-program, and *Recovering from Divorce* by DivorcedCatholic.com, both of which are 13-week programs that utilize video testimonies and group support.

Remarriage/Annulment

A very large number of couples in every parish find themselves in “irregular” situations concerning Church law with respect to marriage, very often having been married outside the Church. Couples in irregular marriages are not considered in full communion with the Church, meaning they are unable to receive the Sacraments, though they may (and should be invited to) participate in parish activity to the fullest extent possible. Many end up leaving the Church because of a sense that they no longer belong, and it can be very difficult in the current culture to both communicate a welcoming invitation to deeper participation and to lead them to recognizing the need to correct their situation. Pastors, with the assistance of the parish FLC’s, have a duty to ensure that individuals both have access to and are accompanied through the available processes and personal conversion necessary for this.

Regarding the “annulment” process, an important element to keep in mind is that the laws of the Church are rooted primarily in what marriage *is*, its dignity, and its goodness. A “Declaration of Nullity” or an “annulment” is a judgement of the competent Church authority that a marriage was not validly contracted. Typically, these judgements are made within the context of the Diocesan Tribunal. There are different processes that the Tribunal employs to handle the different types of cases, and it is important to be familiar with the in’s and out’s of the different processes.

Procurator/Advocates: To this end, the Tribunal appoints and trains “Procurator-Advocates” specifically to assist the Tribunal in guiding persons seeking annulments (called “petitioners”) through the annulment process. Procurator-Advocates work directly with petitioners to be sure they understand the process, help them to advance their case, and be sure the necessary paperwork and evidence is properly filed with the Tribunal in a timely fashion. The process of filing for a decree of nullity can be an intense and often emotional journey, but it can and should be experienced as a healing process that is best done with the accompaniment of a knowledgeable and compassionate companion.

As the FLC, you will want to know who the Procurator-Advocates are in your parish and work with them to build a welcoming environment that invites participation in the process and handles cases as efficiently and competently as possible. In some cases, parishes may find that there is a need for Procurator-Advocates; FLC’s can be instrumental in helping pastors to identify good candidates to take on this role and to ensure that they receive the proper training. For more information about Procurator-Advocate training, contact the Diocesan Tribunal at 504-861-6291.

Annulment Writing Workshops: The FLA works with an experienced team who provides a series of workshops for groups of individuals who are ready to file for a declaration of nullity. The workshop consists of either five Tuesday evenings or three Saturday mornings, and the participants are given guidance as to how to best write their narratives, choose their witnesses, and gather necessary paperwork. These are held four times a year in different areas of the Archdiocese. There are a few parishes whose leadership provides these workshops for their own parishioners, as well. Contact the FLA for dates and locations.

Pornography

In recent decades, pornography has become one of the strongest factors shaping the culture and the minds and hearts of *most* people, *not only the young*. The overwhelming availability of the internet has caused an epidemic of pornography usage and addiction, and the type of pornography that has become “normal” is much more graphic than anything ever available before. The average age of first exposure is now between 8 and 11, and close to 90% of people have been exposed to pornography multiple times before they reach their twenties. The pornography industry is one of the biggest industries in the world, and it is fueled by human trafficking.

The good news is that the Church is and always has been prepared to be a light in the darkness and the most important and powerful source of healing for what sin destroys. Romans 5:20 says, “where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,” so we have reason to hope that God is not outdone just because we feel overwhelmed and helpless to stop such a powerful force. The Church provides the Sacraments to give us life and union with Christ in the midst of even the most addictive or destructive sinfulness, and we are given the ability and the responsibility to accompany those who are affected.

Awareness and Prevention: One of the major factors (if not *the* major factor) at work in the current pornography epidemic is the lack of understanding on the part of parents as to the danger of pornography and/or how easy it is to access. Or, they themselves have been affected by pornography and struggle to know how to address it with their children.

The early age of exposure is usually not because children are seeking it out, but because pornography companies put a lot of resources into getting images and videos on the screens of young people through image or video searches, popular video or social media sites, and even pop-ups channeled through popular children’s sites. The younger the viewer, the more powerful the effect, and when the content is free, seemingly infinite, and access feels anonymous, it is expecting too much for children to be able to make good decisions when constantly faced with access to what they are naturally supposed to be curious about. Most adults struggle with this constant temptation, as well: 79% of men and 76% of women aged 18–30 report viewing pornography at least once a month, while 63% of men and 21% of women aged 18–30 view pornography at least several times a week.

To take the difficult steps to try to prevent pornography exposure, a person must first understand why it is necessary. Otherwise, the tediousness of filtering and monitoring internet usage and the constant fight to limit it will wear down any weakness of conviction. This, combined with ever-changing technology, makes it very difficult for parents to do this well. So, through our schools and our parish communities, we must make efforts to provide both education as well as models of prevention in the ways we offer internet access. Regular parent meetings and presentations on how to discuss it and how to deal with it when it arises, regular homilies, and updates to school technology policies must be undertaken to communicate the reality of the dangers of pornography usage.

Even the best **device filters** can be bypassed, and the producers of pornography are constantly working to make it easier to access their materials despite filters. However, **accountability software** can make up for what a filter lacks and give parents the ability to monitor and control all of the details of internet activity. The best device filters are currently *Covenant Eyes* www.covenanteyes.com (Christian/Catholic), and *Net Nanny* www.netnanny.com (secular). They cost \$5-\$10 a month, on average. These can be used on any computer, tablet, or smartphone.

Help for those Affected: Studies have shown that pornography usage has a deep and lasting effect on brain function, specifically the capacity for interpersonal relationships, moral decision making, and impulse control. And, it usually does not take much exposure to create a chemical addiction as strong as heavy drugs, which often cannot be overcome without intervention and outside help.

Online programs and resources are the easiest to access, they are anonymous, and the expert resources provided are plentiful and continue to be refreshed. Although in-person help is necessary, online resources can be an excellent first step, especially for those who are too ashamed or scared to involve others directly.

- **ReclaimSexualHealth.com** is a Catholic program that uses the brain science of addiction to break down the addiction process over a six-month period while providing a coach who is available 24/7 and Catholic formation on sexuality, the human person, and healing and restoration through Christ. The cost is either \$49 a month, or \$245 for six months. Clergy can experience it for free in order to better know what they are suggesting. It also provides a free program for spouses as well as one for parents of those who are addicted. There are built-in ways for both clergy and counselors involved in the recovery process to be involved in the tracking and accountability.
- **Fortify (FightTheNewDrug.com)** is a program directed toward teens and young adults, but it is also effective for adults. Teens are able to access the program at no cost, while adults are asked to pay \$39, which helps make the teen version free. It takes about three months to complete and includes educational videos and a progress tracker. Fight the New Drug was created by Mormons, but the materials are for anyone, and they are very modern-looking and appealing to youth.
- **IntegrityRestored.com, ThePornEffect.com**, and other sites provide excellent educational resources, community forums, witness testimonies, and access to experts (psychologists, pastors, and others) for personal help.

Device filters, though absolutely necessary, are not enough, to provide adequate help for someone who is addicted to pornography. However, a filter with **accountability software** can provide a substantial roadblock for someone who is making an effort to fight it, and it can keep them safe from most incidental exposures. The added accountability piece allows their decisions to be brought into the light, which diffuses much of the power of what drives the temptation: anonymity, and isolation. (See suggested programs above.)

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Face to face help is absolutely necessary and can be received through groups, well-chosen accountability partners, and professionals. **My House Men's Group** is currently active here in the Archdiocese and provides weekly meetings using a 12-step structure to provide both accountability and realistic goal-setting for attainable and measurable progress. An accountability partner (or multiple partners) needs to be someone who is trusted by the individual and who has access (either through regular self-reporting or through accountability software) to their behavior regarding pornography (and any sexual "acting out"). A spouse can potentially be a good accountability partner, but there are many factors that could make this problematic (see next section). Getting professional help (i.e., counseling) is suggested as a necessary component to recovery by most top resources. This can be accessed through personal appointments, over the phone, or even online. Our Catholic Counseling Service can be a great resource for this.

My House Men's Group: myhouse@arch-no.org, 504-430-3060

Help for Spouses/Families: We have only recently come to a good understanding of how pornography usage affects spouses and families. Wives of men who use pornography experience deep feelings of inadequacy, rejection, depression, and helplessness, and recently it has been discovered that many show Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms. The need for specific help has become much more clear, and the FLA has recently begun sponsoring a group called **Pearl Ladies' Group** that provides weekly support and formation for women whose husbands are affected by pornography usage and/or sexual "acting out." The children of those affected by pornography usage require special attention, as well. There is a heightened possibility of exposure to a parent's (or older sibling's) pornography, or catching them looking at it or even acting out. There is also a stronger possibility of being sexually abused by the family member, or at the very least, not receiving the full presence, attention, or love they need from the family member. Counseling may be necessary, but in any case, recovery efforts should work to include the family members who are very much affected by this behavior.

Pearl Ladies Group: pearlministry@arch-no.org, 504-343-3359

Bereavement

Many parishes have a bereavement committee who provide hospitality and/or meals for the families who have lost a loved one, and some have a structured way to help them through the grieving process. FLC's should be ready to help to bring about greater parish participation and companionship during such a vital time in the life of a family whether this means working to start a program if one does not exist, or work closely with those already involved. Only Christ can provide what a family truly needs when faced with the death of a loved one, and the Church is the way He established for us to get full access to Him!

There are a few published programs that either provide guidance for a parish team or provide materials to guide those who are grieving. These should be carefully discerned with a special eye to faithfulness to Catholic teaching and the reality of family relationships. Our website, fla.arch-no.org, has a link to a list of parishes in the Archdiocese with active bereavement ministries including descriptions and contact information (look under the "Struggling?" tab).

Naim and *Bridge to Naim* are parish-based groups available in different areas of the Archdiocese that provide help specifically for widows and widowers both during the grieving process immediately after the death of a spouse (*Bridge to Naim*) and for social and spiritual connection once a month for long-term support (*Naim*).

Singles

Often, those who are single request a parish structure to provide for their specific needs since they no longer fit with the youth or young adult groups, and are not married. Programming usually consists of social, formation, and service elements, and different age groups may need to be considered. Single parents should also be given special consideration since they are usually very limited in their ability to participate with any regularity in community activities and often need support specific to parenting issues (see page 9 for more on this).

It is important to keep in mind that those in the single state still have a vocation to holiness and love. This vocation will look different from that of a married person, and it is uniquely able to provide a kind of self-giving service that married people cannot. For this reason, any singles group should be directed to develop their formation, spiritual lives, and even connections to one another in such a way that they are pointed outward in service to their community. A single person is often able to give the time and energy to individuals in need (elderly, disabled, poor, lonely) that a married person is committed to giving to their family. Without the service of those who are not currently committed to a spouse and children, many are left without the love and attention they need. But, with good formation, good connection to the parish community, and an active prayer life, single people can provide a deep and lasting relationship that will lead many others to God and to a fuller life.

Some good articles and resources may be found at SingleCatholics.com.

2017 Archdiocesan Marriage Preparation Program Dates

IJP = Infant Jesus of Prague, Westbank

NS = Northshore Pastoral Center

SCS = St. Catherine of Siena, Metairie

SR = St. Rita, Harahan

Registration is online for Days for the Engaged, Special Marriage and Engaged Encounter. Go to the Archdiocese's Website: nolacatholic.org, click on Ministries, click on Family Life Apostolate, click on Planning to Get Married.

DAYS FOR THE ENGAGED

\$50.00 per couple, per session

January	Part A	21	SCS		July	Part A	8	SCS
	Part B	28	SR			Part B	29	SR
February	Part A	4	NS		Aug.	Part A	12	NS
	Part B	18	IJP			Part B	26	IJP
March	Part A	11	SCS		Sept.	Part A	16	SR
	Part B	25	SR			Part B	30	SCS
April	Part A	1	IJP		Oct.	Part A	21	NS
	Part B	22	NS			Part B	28	IJP
May	Part A	13	IJP		Nov.	Part A	11	IJP
	Part B	27	SR			Part B	18	SR
June	Part A	10	SCS		Dec.	Part A	2	NS
	Part B	24	NS			Part B	16	SCS

SPECIAL
MARRIAGE
PREPARATION
\$50.00

February	11	SCS
June	17	SR
September	2	SCS
November	4	SR

Engaged Encounter
Weekend
\$325.00

Carmelite Spirituality Center

62292 Fish Hatchery Road, Lacombe

January	6-8
February	10-12
March	17-19
April	28-30
June	9-11
August	4-6
September	15-17
November	10-12

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