



Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius
St. Mark's Catholic Church

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Dear Mentoring Couples,

I am extremely grateful that the both of you have agreed to help me prepare engaged couples for marriage. In the world today engaged couples need all the help they can get in order to help them carryout the life long commitment they will make on their wedding day as they celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage.

Your willingness to aid me in the effort shows a deep commitment on your part to both your own marriage and your faith for that I thank God. I would like to take this opportunity though to also let you know that often the teachings of the Church can become confusing and seem unreasonable to some if they are taking out of context. My first expectation for you as married couples sharing in my ministry to help engage couple has to do with your acceptance of Church teachings.

1. I expect that you will never teach anything that opposes the Church's teaching on morals especially in the area of sexual morality. I understand that there will be times that you will disagree with Church teachings but I expect you to keep those disagreements to yourselves and not to share them with engaged couples. I also encourage you though to try to resolve your difference with Church teachings. I am always here to help you by offering resources and by discussing the different issues with you.

There is a saying in theology that goes like this: "You can't give what you do not have." The meaning behind this phrase is simple. A person cannot share his or her sense of prayer and what faith means if he or she doesn't pray or live out his or her faith. My next set of expectations then have to do with my expectation of your personal spirituality and your spirituality as a couple.

2. I expect that you live out your faith by attending Mass every Sunday. I know that this may not always be possible to do as a couple but each of you should make every possible effort to attend Mass on the Lord's Day. In addition I strongly recommend that you consider availing yourself to the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year but I recommend four times a year – once for each season.

3. I expect that you will be able to give an honest testimony about the power of prayer in your own lives as a married couple. I therefore think it is necessary that you pray together as a couple or as a family at least once a week and preferably more often. Your prayers need to be able to rise above a set of formal prayers to spontaneous prayer. Prayers like the Our Father and Grace before Meals are important but you should be able to speak out loud to God, your spouse, and possibly your children about your dreams, fears, and the things that you are thankful for. Once again, I am here to help you in any way possible.

I also know from my own life that there is no such thing as a perfect parent and no such thing as a perfect child. Each family will have their own crisis and there will be children who do not follow the example of the faith that their parents have showed them. I do not expect you to be perfect parents or to have perfect children but my next set of expectation have to do with your life as family.

4. There will be times when you will have fights over many different things either between you and your spouse or between the both of you and one or more of your children. I ask though that you please try to put them aside when ministering to engaged couples. I am not asking you to say marriage and family life are

perfect but try not to make yourself feel better by telling the engaged couples your side of a story and expect them to choose your side or to affirm you in your choice.

5. There are sometimes crisis develop in a family, which may lay hidden for long time and then suddenly sprout out. These problems are often too big for families to handle on their own, I ask that you be willing to seek outside help if necessary to help resolve these conflicts and problems. I have many excellent contacts who are experts in helping families.

6. I wish to make it clear that I do not expect you all to be perfect or to have perfect children. I think that you all have many gifts and blessings that make you a great family already. I just ask that you be open to the Holy Spirit if problems arise that begin to affect your family for they are your first priority.

The program I chose to help us prepare these engaged couples for the joys and trials of marriage is “Today and All the Days of Your Life”. This program was created by the Archdiocese of St. Louis and involves the use of 8 Video taped segments, a facilitator’s book, and a couples workbook. The next set of expectations then has to do with the actual program itself.

7. There is an official training workshop that the Archdiocese puts on a couple of times a year. While I am not expecting you to attend a training workshop, I would strongly encourage it. My only expectation for training is that you look at the videotape series before you lead a class. Do not let your first time seeing the tape be the same as the first time you show it to a couple. I also ask that you take a look at the facilitator’s workbook and prepare any related materials for your sessions.

8. It is also my expectation that you will be responsible for scheduling times to meet with the couple(s) that I send your way. The program is design to be done in either four sessions two and half hours apiece, two sessions five hours apiece, or the program could be done all in one day. This may seem a lot but please remember that you will have six months in which to complete all of this. In addition we can work together to maybe develop one-hour sessions or a day in which we and other mentoring couples can all team up and team-teach the sessions.

9. I understand that there will be some couples that you may grow attached to and others that you will not. Please know that I do not expect you to attend the weddings of the couples you are preparing or buy them wedding gifts but I do ask that you give me honest feedback about each couple. The last thing I wish to do is marry a couple who are not ready to be married. If the couple truly loves each other they will want what is best for their future married life and if that requires more counseling or something else then we need to be honest enough to recommend it to them. At the same time, I must reserve the final say as to whether a couple gets married or not.

10. It is my expectation that you will keep things said at your sessions confidential. Please never tell friends or families stories about the couples you’re mentoring that allow them to figure out who the couple is. Also know that the information between you and the couples can be shared with me while still respecting confidentiality.

One of the most important things to remember about ministering to others is the need to take care of yourselves. Know that I am extremely grateful for all that you are doing even if the couples you are ministering to are not.

11. I ask also that you always feel free to approach me with ideas or problems so that we can work out any difficulties and continually strive to improve our program.

Words cannot express my deep gratitude for the both of you agreeing to help me in this most important ministry. I look forward to working with you as we minister to the engaged couples God sends our way. May our Heavenly Father send His Spirit to bless our efforts as we strive to build up the Body of Christ.

Thank you and God bless,

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius
Assoc. Pastor St. Mark's Parish