

Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life (CPML)

Unpacking the Holy See's New Document.

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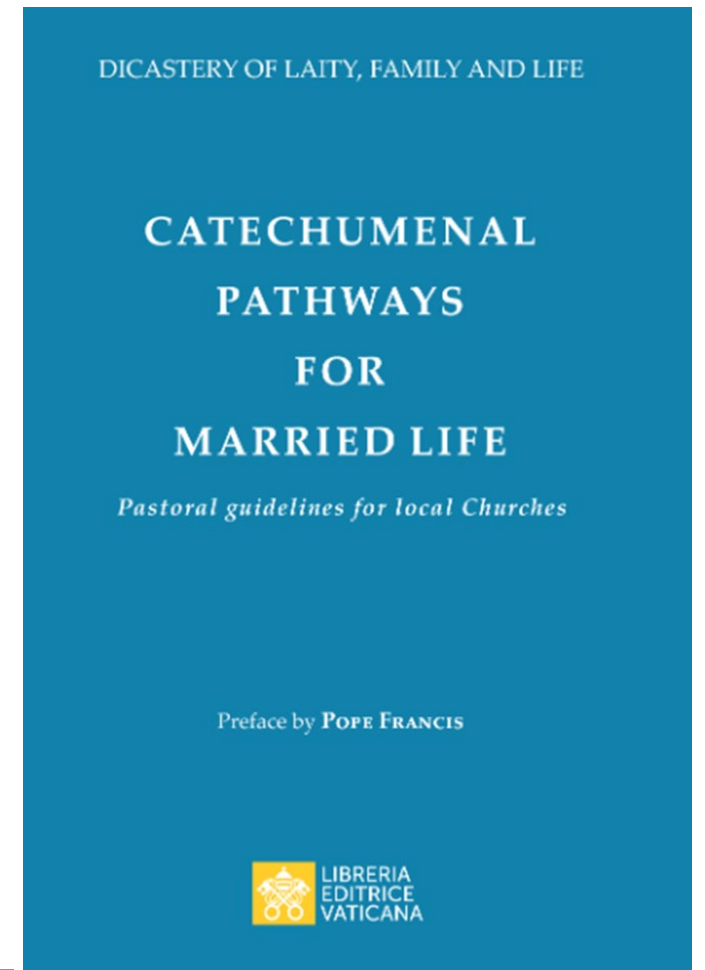


Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life

“As can be seen, the goal is to walk an important stretch of road together with couples in the journey of life, even after the wedding, especially during moments of crisis or discouragement. In this way, we will try to be faithful to the Church, which is mother, teacher, and traveling companion, always at our side” (CPML Intro, +Francis)

PS: For a good summary, skip to the conclusion!

[Weblink to the English version](#)



Referencing Documents



- a) **Familiaris Consortio** & documents of the PCF (JPII, B16), **CCC**
- b) **+Francis addresses** (to Rota, various pilgrim groups)
- c) **Evangelii Gaudium** + others.
- d) **Amoris Laetitia** – main reference (concluding Family Year of AL)

Not new idea! This is a pastoral, practical application of ideas developed over decades.

Goals/Objectives...



...of the Marriage Catechumenate

“...Enable them to celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage with greater awareness, beginning with an experience of faith and personal encounter with Jesus”. n1

The contemporary reality requires renewed pastoral efforts: n3

- a) Reduced number of people who marry
- b) The short duration of marriage (incl sacramental marriages)
- c) Validity of marriages celebrated – see also n45

Key Ideas

...of the Marriage Catechumenate

1. Purpose: **evangelisation/proclamation**, formation in faith...not just divorce prevention. Emphasis on **vocational discernment, validity, consent**.
2. **Accompaniment** by faith-filled married couples, suitable experts, working with the pastor.
3. **Journey/pathway**: a formation **process** (birth-death) with **stages** and transition **rituals/rites**. Extends before and after the 'engagement' period.

Three Principles

1. **Interconnectedness** ...the pastoral care of married life is not confined to "meetings for engaged couples", but crosses into other pastoral areas, which always seek to include it. n12.
2. **Synodality** ...The Church is communion, and concretely fulfills its essence of communion by walking together, coordinating among all pastoral fields, and encouraging the active participation of all her members in the mission of evangelization. n13
3. **Continuity** refers to the pastoral care of married life, which is not episodic but prolonged in time – i.e permanent. n14

Rites



Transition between Stages

- **Rites:** mark the conclusion of the stage and allow the person to “express the will to continue” n 23.
- Care not to undermine the **free will/consent** with public rites (some may be done privately, or in the group of engaged). N 25, 26
- Rites are preceded/followed by a **retreat.**

Marriage Formation Stages

Familiaris Consortio

vs CPML

1: Remote – children, youth, single adults (any age)

Remote

2: Proximate – seriously dating/discerning marriage, newly 'Engaged'. ~ 1year

Proximate

3: Immediate – 2-3 months prior to wedding. (Focus is spiritual preparation – wedding liturgy, prayer, retreat, Reconciliation)

Final

4: Enrichment – everything after the wedding: newlywed, parenting, crisis, empty nest etc.

Accompaniment
(Newlywed, Crisis)

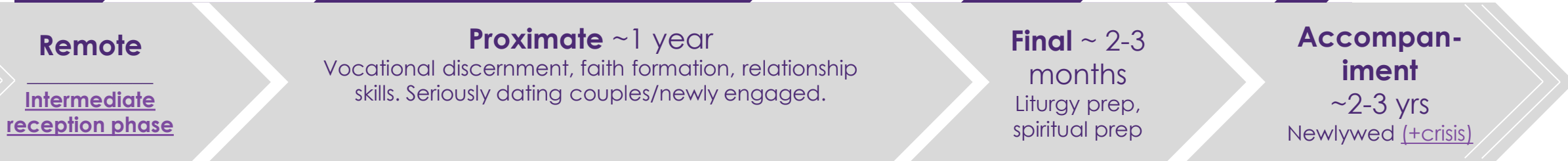
[**+Empowerment** (PMRC) – transition to missionary couples]

RCIA vs CPML

RCIA



CPML



Use Links (underlined) to get more detail.

Pre-Catechumenate: Remote Stage



“The stages of childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood form part of a single, seamless journey of formation, which is based on two fundamental truths: “first, that man is called to live in truth and love; and second, that everyone finds fulfilment through the sincere gift of self” in a vocation.” n31

Pre-Catechumenate: Remote Stage - Aims



“In summary, the purposes of remote preparation are:

- (a) to teach children **self-esteem and respect for others**, and the awareness of their own dignity and respect for that of others;
- (b) to introduce children to **Christian anthropology** and the **vocational perspective** implicit in Baptism which will lead to marriage or consecrated life;
- (c) to **form adolescents in affectivity and sexuality** in view of their future call to generous, exclusive, and faithful love (whether in marriage, priesthood, or consecrated life);
- (d) to offer young people a journey of human and spiritual growth to **overcome immaturity, fears, and resistance, in order to open themselves to relationships of friendship and love** which are neither possessive nor narcissistic, but are rather free, generous, and self-giving.

Pre-Catechumenate: Intermediate phase (“Reception”)



Couple presents for marriage ...

(serious dating – formally engaged).

- i) **Duration:** a few weeks ('active RC') to a few months (little/no faith).
- ii) **Content:** Welcome, proclamation of the kerygma, characteristics of Matrimony n37-39.
- iii) **Goal:** “purify ambiguous motives” n41, “conscious intention to celebrate a true marriage” n44.

Priests – usually the first to receive the request to marry in the Church – have a responsibility to welcome, encourage, & deftly guide engaged couples, AND to impress upon them the profound religious dimension involved. n9

Sensitive Situations

- Cohabitation n40
- Mixed faith n46
- Both catholic but one refuses catechumenal journey n46

Pre-Catechumenate: Intermediate phase (“Reception”)



Non-practicing baptized couples (n43-45)

“The **presence of a living and explicit faith in couples is obviously the ideal situation** to achieve the goal of arriving at the wedding with a clear and conscious intention to celebrate a true marriage” n44

“In cases where the engaged couple **explicitly and formally rejects** that which the Church intends to accomplish in the celebration of marriage, **they cannot be admitted** to the sacramental celebration.” n45

“If, on the other hand, the bride and groom possess an **imperfect disposition** without refuting what the Church intends to accomplish, then their admission to the celebration of the sacrament should not be ruled out.” n45

Pre-Catechumenate: Rite of Entry



- **Public** (eg presenting couples to community @ Sunday celebration) or **private** (protecting discernment and freedom of partners from expectations of the community/family).
- **Includes:** prayer/blessing, presentation of suitable symbol eg bible.
- Simple format to avoid appearing like a matrimonial rite (ie entering period of discernment, not committing to marriage).

n47

Catechumenate Stage 1: Proximate



Proximate Stage (~1 year)

“The specific objective of this stage is to **finalize the discernment** of each couple about their nuptial vocation. This can lead to the free, responsible and considered decision to marry, or it can lead to the equally free and considered decision to end the relationship and not to marry.” n55

“Proximate preparation, in general, should ideally last approximately one year, depending on the couple’s previous experience of faith and ecclesial involvement.” n48

Catechumenate Stage 1: Proximate



Content

- Revival of catechesis of Christian initiation, scripture, prayer, mission of spouses n49
- Participation in life of the church n50
- Catechesis in theology of marriage n51
- Interpersonal dynamics n52
- Sexuality, bioethics n53
- Self-awareness, especially psychological shortcomings n54
- Accompaniment: mercy and truth n56
- Importance of chastity n57
- Spiritual formation – prayer (personal, community, couple), sacraments, retreats, adoration, mission & charitable activities. n58

Catechumenate Stage 1: Proximate - Aims



“To summarize, the aims of proximate preparation are:

- a) To revisit a **catechesis of initiation** into the Christian faith and to draw couples into the life of the Church;
- b) To begin a unique **initiation into the Sacrament of Marriage** and to come to a clear awareness of its essential aspects;
- c) To deepen understanding of the facets of the **couple’s relationship** and to become aware of **psychological and affective shortcomings**;
- d) To complete an **initial phase of discernment** about the couple’s vocation to marriage;
- e) To continue more decisively along a **spiritual journey**”. **n63**

Catechumenate Stage 1: Proximate - Rite of Betrothal



Concludes the Proximate Preparation

“By ritualizing this moment, couples grow in awareness that they are called in the months ahead to reach an inner certainty regarding the decision to marry and regarding the person whom they will marry.” n60

‘This person is the companion with whom I choose to live in a relationship of authentic, faithful, and lasting love and with whom I want to build a family; this is the person whom the Lord has given me to walk a path of holiness together, and who will be father/ mother of the children God will give us, and with whom I will live our “mission” of marriage for a lifetime.’ n60

Rite of Betrothal

Should be public & separate from the Mass:

- Opening rites
- Liturgy of the Word
- Prayers of the Faithful
- Prayer of blessing
- A sign of commitment (e.g. blessing, blessing of rings - opt)
- Conclusion.

N61-2

Catechumenate Stage 2: Final (“Immediate”)



Final – a few months

- a) Brief entrance retreat
- b) Exploration of essential elements of Catholic marriage: “the essential characteristics of marriage (indissolubility, unity, fidelity, fruitfulness) and which will be the specific object of the canonically envisaged conversations with the parish priest” n65
- c) Recall of doctrinal, moral and spiritual aspects of marriage from Proximate stage

“For this reason, it would be useful to reformulate the kerygmatic proclamation of Christ’s redemption that saves us from the reality of sin, which always looms over human life”. n67

Catechumenate Stage 2: Final



Reconciliation

“Spouses must never forget that **sin is ultimately the real threat to their love**. Estrangement from God is far more serious than any psychological shortcoming or imperfect interpersonal dynamic, since distance from God triggers a spiral of closure and selfishness in the human heart that hinders true love, because it prevents openness, respect, and generosity toward another person.” n67

“Moreover, couples should have recourse to God’s forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, through which God bestows His love which is more powerful than any sin”. n67

Catechumenate Stage 2: Final



Liturgy Preparation

“As they approach the wedding, couples should become aware that they are not spectators but rather, in the name of Christ, **ministers of the celebration of their marriage**. For this reason, ample space shall be devoted to the liturgical preparation of couples, so as to help them fully understand the signs and meaning of the Rite of Marriage”. n68

“Just as ordained ministers are called to become “living icons” of Christ the priest, so are Christian spouses called to become “living icons” of Christ the bridegroom”. n68

Catechumenate Stage 2: Final



Late Comers

“Various circumstances may arise whereby some couples enter the catechumenal journey at this stage, which means that **the final preparation offers them the only concrete possibility of receiving a minimum of formation** in view of the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage. It would be appropriate to involve these couples in additional personalized conversations with the pastoral team for marriage preparation”. n67

Catechumenate Stage 2: Final

Week Before the Wedding

- a) 1–2-day Spiritual retreat or prayer vigil a few days before the wedding. n70
- b) Sacrament of Reconciliation. n71
- c) Involvement of parents, witnesses, family (who represent and manifest the ecclesial community) in prayer and for couple to receive the parents blessing as is traditional in the bible. n72

Reconciliation

“Experience shows that receiving God’s forgiveness – perhaps even making a more involved confession covering previously-confessed sins, if appropriate – prepares spouses better than anything else to welcome the grace which God offers them in the Sacrament of Marriage, since it removes feelings of profound guilt resulting from past “baggage”, grants inner peace, and directs the spirit toward God’s grace and mercy and toward that which really matters.” n71

Catechumenate Stage 2: Final - Aims



“To summarize, the aims of final preparation stage are:

- a) To recall the doctrinal, moral, and spiritual aspects of marriage (also explicitly discussing the contents of the prescribed canonical interviews);
- b) To have spiritual experiences of encounter with the Lord;
- c) To prepare for a conscious and fruitful participation in the liturgy of matrimony.

n73

Catechumenate Stage 2: Final - Rite of Marriage



Rite of Marriage - Wedding

The document offers no comment on the wedding liturgy, other than to suggest that the couple be involved in planning it.

Catechumenate Stage 3: Accompaniment (“Enrichment”)



Accompaniment of Newlywed (2-3 years)

- **Accompaniment:** “first years of married life need to be “accompanied”, and newlyweds should not be left in solitude.” n74
- “The catechumenal pathway does not conclude with the celebration of marriage. In fact, the entire process should not be understood as an isolated act, but rather as the **entry into a “permanent state”**, which therefore requires a unique **“ongoing formation”** involving reflection, dialogue, and help from the Church.” n74
- **Apprenticeship.** Role of grandparents n80, Church’s constant and permanent care for spouses n83

Mystagogy = introduction to the mystery.

Revisit elements of the marriage rite and apply to concrete examples.

“Become what you are! You are now spouses; therefore, live more and more as spouses! The Lord has blessed and ‘filled’ your union with grace, so put that grace to good use!” n77

Catechumenate Stage 3: Accompaniment

Newlywed Interaction

Periodic meetings: accompanying team + community couples

Topics:

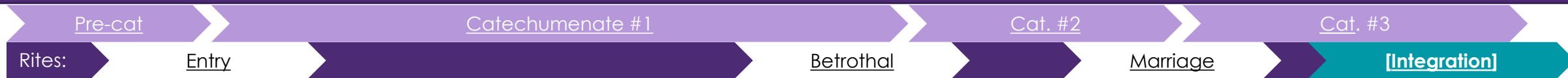
- Challenges, expectations, conflict, seasons/stages.
- Sexuality, transmission of life, regulation of births, raising children n79.
- Marriage ministry must focus on the marriage bond and the encounter with Christ n81,82.
- Promotion of Sacraments of Eucharist & Reconciliation n82

Activating Grace:

“...the grace contained in the sacrament is not automatically actuated, but rather requires the spouses to cooperate with it by responsibly taking on the tasks and challenges that married life presents”. n75

Suggests a ‘marriage diary’ to record sufferings and joys as a “periodic verification of marital communion... a memorial of the grace of the Holy Spirit working in the family”. n78

Catechumenate Stage 3: Accompaniment



Newlywed → Newly Married

Transition to Mission

“As couples develop their marital identity, their sense of mission, which flows from the sacrament, should grow. Therefore, as the catechumenal pathway for married life draws to an end... couples need to be invited to become part of the ordinary family ministry in their parish or the Church community... Newlyweds, for example, may be gradually invited to participate in the catechumenal preparation for marriage of new groups of engaged couples, as well as in community life and youth ministry, taking on special roles in community organization”. n84

Newly Married Parish Ministries

- Marriage Catechumenate (accompanying the engaged)
- Youth ministry
- Married spirituality
- Community life
- Family movements

n84

Catechumenate Stage 3: Accompaniment - Aims



“To summarize, the aims of accompaniment ... are:

- a) To present a “mystagogical marriage catechesis” exploring the spiritual and existential implications of the Sacrament of Marriage;
- b) To help married couples embark upon a healthy path in their inter-personal relationship from the outset;
- c) To explore in depth the themes of sexuality in married life, the transmission of life, and the raising of children;
- d) To instill in couples the firm will to defend their marriage bond in any crisis situation that may arise;
- e) To facilitate an encounter with Christ to provide an indispensable source of renewal of the grace of marriage and to foster a marital spirituality;
- f) to recall the meaning of the unique mission of Christian spouses”.n85

[Post Catechumenate] Accompaniment in Crisis



“However, in order to prevent a crisis situation from worsening to the point of becoming unsalvageable, the parish or community should offer a pastoral service for accompanying couples in crisis, to which those who perceive that they are in such a situation can turn: “what is urgently needed today is a ministry to care for those whose marital relationship has broken down.” n87

“Attention shall be focused in two directions: to spouses in difficulty, and also to their children who must be accompanied”. n89

“Accompaniment in these moments, therefore, should offer both psychological and spiritual assistance, in order to rediscover the profound meaning of the marital bond and the awareness of Christ’s presence among the spouses, through a personalized mystagogical path and the Sacraments” n90.

[Post Catechumenate] Accompaniment in Crisis



“In practical terms, this means creating privileged opportunities to introduce couples to the art of discernment in daily life, so that in times of suffering they know how to recognize the dangerous pitfalls to avoid and the immaturities or wounds to overcome. Couples whose hearts are weary can be urged to focus on the words: “Abide in my love” (Jn 15:9)”. n90

“Couples should be assisted along a journey of progressive growth and invited to discernment, all in the key of a kerygmatic proclamation”. n92

Illustration of Accompaniment program based on the Emmaus story.

- Individual meetings
- Prayerful listening
- Facilitated sharing
- Group meetings
- Scripture + meditation
- Adoration
- Reconciliation
- Eucharist

(ie not just lectures, fosters human and spiritual closeness)

n91, 92

[Post Catechumenate] Separation/Divorce



“At times [separation] becomes morally necessary, ... Even so, “separation must be considered as a last resort, after all other reasonable attempts at reconciliation have proved vain”. ... Need or discernment and respect in pastoral care. n93

“...**divorced people who have not remarried**, and often bear witness to marital fidelity, ought to be encouraged to find in the Eucharist the nourishment they need to sustain them in their current state of life. The local community and pastors should accompany these people with solicitude, particularly when children are involved.” n94

“The nuptial dimension of the two vocations – **Holy Orders and Marriage** – is manifested in these cases in all its beauty and complementarity. In this sense, the Church needs to discover the ability of separated faithful to offer pastoral care, since they can play meaningful roles in their communities by coming to the aid of others.”

n94

Summary

A True Catechumenate



The requirements... n16

- a) **Sufficiently long** to allow couples reflection and maturation
- b) Begins with the **concrete experience of human love**, and **centres of faith and the encounter with Christ**
- c) **Divided into stages**, marked by rites of passage/rituals
- d) Includes the following: **formation, reflection, discussion, dialogue, liturgy, community, prayer, and celebration.**

Modalities

Create it, pilot it, refine it
n 17.

The document notes that a local communities will need to experiment to find an ideal pathway for its context, with flexibility to adapt in particular circumstances.

Summary

Creativity & Flexibility



Caution against 'one size fits all' approach: "This "pastoral instrument" cannot simply be "imposed" as the only way of preparation for matrimony but must be used with discernment and common sense" n16.

→ **Adapt for the local church**

→ **Adapt for individual couples** (faith-filled vs faith-less (mixed faith couples), chaste vs sexually active/cohabitating, children, previous marriages, age/maturity, mental health, disability etc)

"Faced with the plurality of personal situations, each diocese/eparchy could plan a common form of catechumenal pathways, and then evaluate ways to customise them according to the couples. Pastoral creativity and flexibility will be essential."
n 18, (also n25)

Summary

Who is responsible?



...the entire ecclesial community!

“...priests, Christian Spouses, religious men and women, and pastoral workers who must collaborate among themselves in agreement with their bishop.

... **Marriage is not only a social act; for Christians, it is an ecclesial act.** Therefore, the whole Church, as the body of Christ, takes charge of it, and feels the need to be of service to future families”. n 6.

Mutual complementarity Ecclesial co-responsibility

n 8, 86.

Priests/Bishops/religious = oversight & coordination n9

Married couples = Primary role

“The preparation of couples for marriage is a **true work of evangelization**, and the lay faithful, especially married couples, receive an equally important call as religious and ordained ministers to participate in the Church’s evangelizing mission: they are pastoral workers”. n10

Summary

Need for formation



“The matrimonial catechumenate is not a preparation for an “exam to pass”, but for a “life to live“...

... “Considering this goal, the ongoing formation and training of priests and religious should remain a priority since they often use language that is “distant” from the concrete reality of families and difficult for them to grasp...

...For this reason, communities should encourage married couples to be active members in the pastoral care of married life, in their identity as spouses rather than simply as individual believers.” n20

Formators should...
“possess a formation and style of accompaniment suited to the catechumenal journey. ... it is not so much a matter of sharing notions or imparting skills. Rather, it is about guiding, assisting and being close to couples along a path to walk together”. n20

A Marriage Catechumenate

How do we get from **here** to **there**?

Resources from PMRC



PMRC AUSTRALIA
Parish & Marriage Resource Centre



Smartloving.org

Couples

Courses (online & live),
coaching, webinars, blog,
syndicated column



Cathfamily.org

Parents/Catechists

Online database of Catholic
activities, recipes, articles, celebrating
Catholic culture



In Faith. In Love.

Marriageresourcecentre.org

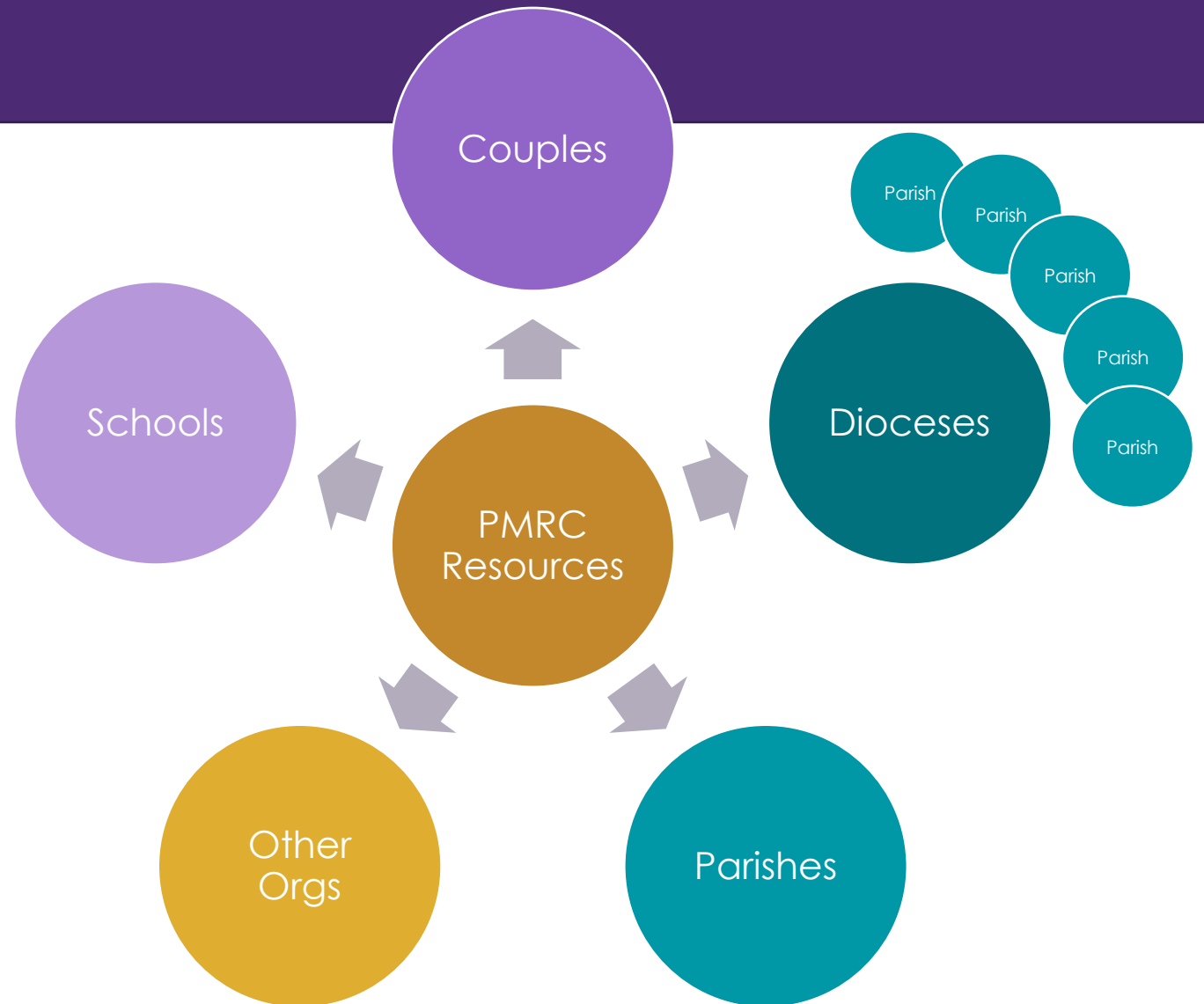
Leaders

eJournal, RoundTable, Conference,
Resource database, LMF Network,
Raphael Network

PMRC Australia

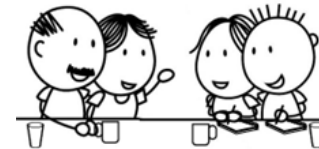
Centrally Enabled Locally Delivered

Quality resources, developed by skilled teams, utilizing modern technology, designed to be deployed locally with minimal training of local personnel.



SmartLoving Courses

| Discern | Engaged | Fertility | Newlywed | Sponsor | Marriage Kit | Break Through | Theology |
|--|---|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| First four lessons of Engaged + supplementary material on discernment. | 9 lessons (incl Fertility, Newlywed courses, + Wedding liturgy planner. | An integrated approach to Fertility Awareness Methods (based on STM). | Topics for the first 2 years of marriage (email prog to be upgraded). | Identical curriculum to Engaged with tips and coaching for Sponsor-Engaged meetings. | 5 Lessons for marriage enrichment. Ideal for low-faith/mixed-faith couples. | For individual spouses in stressed marriages. No couple activities. | Introduction to the Theology of the Body + Spiritual Exercises for the married. |
| | Also available: Leader notes for Group Experience. | Included with Engaged. | Included with Engaged. | Free | Also available: Leader notes for Group Experience. | Also available: Leader notes for Group Experience. | |



SmartLoving Marriage Catechumenate

