

HOW TO GET STARTED



Once a diocese has determined it likes the content of the *God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage*, the next question often is:

“How do we implement the program?”

First, the diocese needs to decide if *God's Plan* will be offered *regionally by deaneries or vicariates* or whether the diocese will *equip local parishes to sponsor the program*. The answer to this question will determine how to best roll-out the program.

Diocese-Administered

If your diocese decides on regional *God's Plan* sessions, the first step is to identify couples or individuals to serve as facilitators/instructors of the program. The diocese can identify facilitators/instructors through personal contacts and existing parish relationships, thus eliminating the need for large-scale recruitment promotion.

The three primary advantages of diocesan-level implementation are:

- 1) the diocese can maintain greater quality control by screening potential facilitators;
- 2) it is easier to get started because only a small number of facilitators need to be trained; and
- 3) the diocese can likely anticipate that a larger number of engaged couples will experience the *God's Plan* program because the diocese is encouraging its use.

Parish-Administered

If a parish-level implementation is chosen, marketing to parishes will be needed to encourage them to send facilitator couples to the Training. *One advantage to running the God's Plan program at the parish level is that the facilitator couples can work more closely with engaged couples and thereby develop parish-based relationships.* The primary difficulty, though, with a parish-based program is identifying and recruiting people to serve as facilitators/instructors. Therefore, we recommend a partnership between the diocese and parishes in which parishes would send engaged couples to the diocesan *God's Plan* sessions (so as to maintain a high level of catechesis regarding the Church's teachings on marriage and sexuality), but the parish would still oversee what is commonly referred to as the “life skills” portion of marriage preparation. These life skills components may include an inventory and talks on communications, finances, family-of-origin, and more.



DIOCESE-ADMINISTERED

Program

- 1 *CONDUCT AN “INFLUENCER” MEETING.* This is where your office identifies a series of priests and laity who are Theology of the Body enthusiasts and eager to see it as part of marriage preparation. The purpose of this Influencer Meeting is to introduce the program to key “influencers,” garner their support, and have them identify who should go to the *God’s Plan* “Live” Weekend Training. It’s likely that a number of these contacts will also be interested in attending the “Live” Training.
- 2 *DETERMINE WHETHER THE DIOCESE, PARISHES, OR COUPLES* will pay for training (including the pre-requisite materials).
- 3 *MEET WITH YOUR BISHOP OR OTHER DIOCESAN LEADERS TO SHARE THE VISION* of the program and show the support you already have in place as well as recommendations on how the program would be administered in the diocese.
- 4 *DISTRIBUTE THE PRE-REQUISITE MATERIALS* to all facilitator couples to be trained.
- 5 *CONDUCT THE “LIVE” WEEKEND TRAINING.*
- 6 *CHOOSE A SERIES OF DATES AND LOCATIONS* over the next year when the program will be offered in the diocese.
- 7 *RUN AN INFORMATION NIGHT.* The purpose of this is to provide parishes with information about *God’s Plan* and encourage them to send couples to the program.
Note: Information Nights should still be considered for those dioceses that have the *God’s Plan* program as a requirement for engaged couples.
- 8 *CONDUCT THE GOD’S PLAN SESSIONS IN THE UPCOMING YEAR, EVALUATE* how things are going, and make appropriate logistical adjustments where needed.



In summary, the order of events for the *Diocesan-administered program* is:

- 1) “INFLUENCER” MEETING (to gain support of leaders)
- 2) “LIVE” WEEKEND TRAINING
- 3) INFORMATION NIGHT
(to encourage parishes to send engaged couples to the program)



PARISH-ADMINISTERED

Program

The key difference between a diocesan- and parish-administered program is that facilitators/instructors must be identified for each parish, rather than just a few for the entire diocese. This is a much more challenging task.

This is also why we recommend that your diocese consider running the *God's Plan* program on a regional basis, at least until you can identify a sufficient number of qualified parish facilitators/instructors.

The parish-administered approach requires that the Information Night be held prior to the Training so as to attract as many parish marriage preparation teams as possible to the Training. (In the diocesan-administered program, however, the Information Nights are simply to encourage pastors/parishes to send engaged couples to the actual *God's Plan* sessions in upcoming year).

In summary, the order of events in a *parish-administered program* is:

- 1) "INFLUENCER" MEETING (to gain support of leaders)
- 2) INFORMATION NIGHT
(to encourage marriage prep teams to attend the Training)
- 3) "LIVE" WEEKEND TRAINING



Please note that although we have listed the two options above (and on the previous pages) in an "either/or" manner, you may think these are your only options. In reality, your diocese could implement *God's Plan* at both the diocesan and parochial levels. In short, there are a variety of options. Please speak to your *God's Plan* representative to discuss these options.

GOD'S PLAN FOR
A JOY-FILLED
Marriage

To introduce the *God's Plan for a Joy-Filled Marriage* program in your diocese call:

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