

“Transformed in Love” – Course Overview

The “*Transformed in Love*” Marriage preparation course is provided to couples who are being married in the parish. The course is presented by several married couples and the Parish Priest. These couples have been married for a number of years ranging from between 4 to 40 years. They have a wide variety of experience from their own marriages and within other voluntary work they undertake to promote the growth of strong marriages and family life, for the happiness of couples and the good of society.

The course is conducted over 2 full days and below is a summary of the 13 topics covered in the course. *Some of these topics are shorter than others but all previous participants rate the speaker’s own examples and experiences as one of the strengths of the course. Time is also allocated to couples discussing topics and setting goals on their own.*

1. ***Self-knowledge:*** Understanding the temperament of your future spouse and why they act and think the way they do. This knowledge of the 4 temperament types helps you also understand your strengths and weaknesses and where you need to adjust your behavior. Gain an understanding of your family of origin and the impact your upbringing will have on the new family you are about to create even before children arrive.
2. ***Communication:*** Learning skills on how to communicate well and how to control and manage areas where poor communication can cause conflict and hurt. Experience a demonstration on poor communication and evaluate and talk about your own experiences together.
3. ***Expectations:*** An expectation is not just hoping something will happen but assuming it will happen! This topic covers a wide range of expectations a couple may have and how best to express them; where these expectations come from, and are they realistic?
4. ***What is Love?*** Learning about the 4 types of love everyone experiences in life, but gaining an understanding of the type of love that is selfless and focused on the other person not oneself.
5. ***God is Love:*** The greatest love story and how we can access God’s grace through the Sacraments.
6. ***What is Marriage?*** Understanding Marriage as a natural institution in order to better understand the meaning of the vows a couple are taking and the way of life they are choosing.
7. ***What is Sacramental Marriage:*** Marriage between Christians is a Sacrament! What this means and to help couples understand and appreciate the Christian Faith and how it can help them to have a wonderful marriage. It helps couples to understand that turning to God for help in difficult times can be a game changer.

8. ***The Rite of Marriage:*** Understanding and reflection on the vows a couple will be making and all the elements of the Marriage Ceremony.
9. ***Finances:*** Helping couples evaluate their attitude toward finances and the need for a unified approach that is responsible and generous.
10. ***Five Spiritual Practices for Marriage and Family Life:*** Provides practical information regarding five spiritual practices that nurture faith and give an outline on how to live a good life for yourself and your future children. Without a goal for life we can flounder.
11. ***The Teaching Mass:*** For Catholics and non-Catholics; gain an understanding of this celebration which is central to the faith. This topic includes a tour of the church and the Sacristy to view precious objects used within the Mass and the meaning behind their use.
12. ***Marital Sexuality:*** The purpose and nature of this intimate act between married couples. To introduce couples to Natural Family Planning Methods, their scientific background and their efficacy and more importantly how their use can have a positive influence of their whole relationship.
13. ***Guarding your love so it lasts a lifetime:*** How to establish healthy boundaries to protect your love and family life from challenges living in today's society.

Testimonies from couples who have completed the course:

"Firstly, I would like to thank you and all the volunteers that came along to this course, I love how this gave real examples on the back of the material being delivered

As a bit of skeptic myself and not from the catholic faith, I always was very wary of this course and what it would entail, I'll be honest, I felt very reserved on day 1 of the course.

As the course went on I found myself very engaged in the material at hand, I found it very interesting the lengths the catholic church (particularly St Mary's) was going to ensure we had all the tools for a successful and happy marriage.

And that's just it, we were provided with "tools", it gave us the tools to communicate, to speak with one another on touchy subjects but with one common goal of understanding. I have already adopted some of the communication skills (not completely- this will take time) but I have noticed it has made me think twice before raising an issue and thinking about how I feel about it first, then deciding whether it really needs to be an issue. I also know Maria enjoyed the course as much as I did, and it was the topic of conversation on our ride home

I also think that it was a small investment of time (as I know some people didn't like the 2-day length), that far outweighs the benefits myself and Maria have gained throughout this course."

Steve and Maria.

"Transformed in love" offered a warm, relaxed and welcoming experience for us as we learnt the difference between a natural and sacramental marriage, understanding ourselves and each other and to build a marriage and family within today's culture and the Catholic faith. It was also reassuring that a Catholic marriage is bound to have bumps on the road and to tackle these issues with talking, listening and communicating and hearing other married couples share their experiences."

Tara and Domagoj.