

St. Joseph, Pillar of Families Parishes
Marriage Preparation Mentor Couple
Biographies

Updated July 2023

Introduction

Dear Engaged Couple,

Congratulations on your engagement and thank you for asking the Church and the Lord to be part of your marriage preparations. He will bless you in abundantly in this time of planning, discernment and prayer!

This book was given to you to help you choose a mentor couple to walk with you on your journey toward the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. Inside, you will find the stories of several couples who desire to mentor couples like you. Each mentor is unique but all of them are strong witnesses to the Sacrament. You will also find the guidelines for choosing a mentor in this book for your reference.

Before you read, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to choose the mentor who is right for you.

In Christ,

St. Joseph, Pillar of Families Marriage Preparation Team

Guidelines for Choosing a Mentor Couple

Prayerfully consider:

- Who do you both admire?
- With whom are you both comfortable?
- Of whom can you say, “I would be happy to have a marriage like that?” or “I love the way they talk to each other and their kids?”

The mentor you choose must:

- actively practice the Catholic Faith
- attend Mass regularly
- have been married in the Church for at least five (5) years.
- be in good standing with the Church
- attend St. Joseph, Pillar of Families parishes or the parish that you will belong to after you are married.

You do not have to know the couple very well.

The mentor couple should be people who can hold you accountable, inspire, and challenge you. This is preferably not an immediate relative, and not a peer or a “buddy.”

Please choose your mentor couple before you meet with the Marriage Prep Coordinator. Your mentors will attend this meeting with you!

Paul and Bree Bezy

How long have you been married? 24 years in July 2021

How many children do you have? 11 Ages? 22, 21, 20, 17, 16, 13, 11, 9, 7, 5, 3

How did you meet your spouse? We knew of each other when we were children attending the same Catholic grade school in Muncie, IN. We attended the same high school and college as well. However, we started dating when Bree was a Senior in high school and Paul a Junior in college. We both regularly attended the 5:00 p.m. Sunday Mass and Bree noticed that a cute, faithful guy was always at the same Mass. So, naturally she asked his younger sister if he would go on a date with her. His response, "Sure, but she has to ask me out." Bree did. In his defense, Paul touts that he was the one to propose.

What do each of you do for work? Paul is a Safety Manager in the automotive industry. Bree is a homeschooling stay at home mom.

What are your interests and hobbies? Bree enjoys reading, running, jigsaw puzzles, baking, and hosting parties where other people can socialize. Paul and Bree enjoy walking, hiking, and watching movies together. Paul will consider some hobbies when he's retired and caught up on sleep.

What makes you and your family unique? We obviously have a lot of children. We have moved many times and have lived in several different states in the Midwest, so are not lifers in the community. This leads to disagreements on how to properly pronounce Bellefontaine, Russia, and Versailles, with Bree tending towards the French from her years of learning it in school. We are very dorky and have strange humor.

What are your passions? Clearly, we are passionate about each other. Did you not see the aforementioned reference to eleven children? Bree is passionate about M&M's, Coke in a can, and then trying to run it all off. Paul is passionate about getting his three littlest boys to sleep every night. They both love God and just try to keep on chugging along in this great adventure of life.

What is your favorite part of being Catholic? Paul appreciates that the Church inspires us with beauty and art to help us grow closer to God. He likes the idea that you can go into any Catholic church in the world and it still contains the tabernacle with Jesus. Bree likes the beauty of the Easter Vigil, where candles are given to all and her children get to hold flames not once, but twice during the Mass. That requires much faith, and hopefully a good insurance policy. We both appreciate that we have given each other our most solemn vows and that our marriage is a sacrament.

Dan & Deanna Chappie

How long have you been married? 22 years (August 2023)

How many children do you have? 2 Ages? 17, 14

How did you meet your spouse? One of Deanna's former students introduced us at Scudzy's. We then had a double date with them as our first date.

What do each of you do for work? Dan has worked at Area Energy & Electric/Regal Plumbing & Heating for 32 years. Deanna has been a Spanish teacher at Houston High School for 32 years.

What are your interests and hobbies? Dan's biggest hobby is farming with his dad. He also enjoys watching The Millennial Farmer and Larson Farms. Deanna enjoys reading, traveling and working with her flowers in the spring and summertime. Together we enjoy camping, attending all of our children's activities including soccer games, track meets and band concerts, just to name a few.

What makes you and your family unique? We didn't get married until Dan was 29 and Deanna was 32. We were older when we had our kids, but we have always felt like that has been more of an advantage than a disadvantage. We had our Schoenstatt home shrine blessed in 2017.

What are your passions? Dan is passionate about providing for his family and farming. Deanna is passionate about her faith, family, teaching, and immigration issues.

What is your favorite part of being Catholic? Dan's favorite part of being Catholic is the gift of the Eucharist. Deanna's favorite part of being Catholic is the call to live out the themes of Catholic Social Teaching. Deanna has developed a deep devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary through the consecration of 33 Days to Morning Glory and Schoenstatt. Together, we love attending mass with our family and the history, tradition and universality of catholicism. We also made our consecration to St. Joseph together and continue to enjoy a special devotion to him.

Dan and Melissa Jock

How long have you been married? 34 years this October (2021)

How many children do you have? Ages? 4 Children: 29, 27, 19, 17

How did you meet your spouse? We both were attending college in Columbus Ohio, met through a mutual friend

What do each of you do for work? Dan has his own company, AT Plus, installing, programming and servicing business telephone systems and security systems. Melissa organizes a Mother's Retreat and a Girl's Retreat and helps Dan's business with bookkeeping.

What are your interests and hobbies? Dan loves working outside, working on cars, going to Eldora speedway and golf. Melissa loves music, reading, tennis, golf, and hiking. Together we love camping, nice dinners out, golfing, grilling out and sitting on our front porch enjoying the outdoors.

What makes you and your family unique? We are complete opposites. Dan is an introvert and very laid back. Melissa is more of an extrovert and more reactive. Our kids have a big gap in between the first two and the last two. So we feel that our younger kids have kept us young.

What are your passions? Dan's passions are his faith, family, conservative values, natural health and cars. Melissa's are faith, family, conservative values and music.

What is your favorite part of being Catholic? Dan loves the history, the depth, and the orthodoxy of the Catholic Church. Melissa loves the example and stories of the saints, sacraments, the clear teachings and the same things Dan loves. Together, the Sacrament of Marriage has been the anchor. Knowing it is a sacrament, knowing we must keep working even through the tough times when we don't particularly 'like' each other. We thank God for this Sacrament, because without it we could have walked away during those times and regretted it.

Mike and Molly LaForme

Hello! We are Mike and Molly LaForme. Our story begins at Shelby Hills preschool in Sidney, 2003. Mike was working for Ferguson Construction as the head foreman on a large addition at the preschool and I (Molly) was working as a daycare aid with special needs children, trying to pay off my college debt. Mike and I were not young and fresh out of college when we met, but I was in my late 20s and Mike in his mid 30s. We began to date in August of 2003 and decided within a few short months we were in love and wanted to get married!

Mike's background is interesting! He is full-blooded Native American and was born and raised for the first part of his life on an Indian Reservation in Canada. He later moved to West Virginia; then to Lima, Ohio; where he would attend Northwestern College; finally moving to Sidney to work for Ferguson. He later became an iron worker, working in the field for several years, then worked his way up to become the General Superintendent at Piqua Steel. Mike was raised Pentecostal and very active in his church when we met. His journey to the Catholic faith, while all of his family and friends were Pentecostal, was unexpected, very personal and profound! Mike came into the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil in April of 2004, just before our June wedding!

My background is wonderful, but not as varied as Mike's. I was born in Findlay, Ohio and move to Sidney when I was two years old. I attended Holy Angels school, where my mother was my sixth grade teacher and my father was my principal when I was in eighth grade. I had to be on my best behavior! I went to Lehman high school, then went on to college at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, where I received my bachelors degree in Theology, a minor in Philosophy, with a concentration in Human Life Studies. I started a job at Holy Angels Catholic Church as the youth coordinator after Mike and I were married and worked there almost two years. As we began having children, Mike and I decided it would work best for our family if I stayed home with the children, which I have done ever since.

In our 17 years of marriage Mike and I have been blessed with six beautiful children ages 16 to 2, with our seventh child due this July 2021. We love family life! We take our children camping each summer and build wonderful, lasting memories. We have a large family who lives around us and we enjoy lots of picnics and barbecues and get-togethers! Our Catholic faith is at the center of our lives and we thank God every day for the full and beautiful life He has given to us!

Jim and Jill O'Leary

How long have you been married? 52 years

How many children do you have? Ages? Ages 51, 49, 48, 45, 42, 31 (5 boys and 1 girl) and 19 grandchildren!

How did you meet your spouse? We knew each other in school because his sister was in my (Jill's) class, but he is 4 years older than I, so we didn't "hang out", but we danced at my sister's wedding when I was in college and he was teaching. And the rest is history!

What do each of you do for work? Jim-retired principal and teacher. Jill-retired teacher

What are your interests and hobbies? Both enjoy camping, kayaking, and playing cards and games, like corn hole and bocce ball. We enjoy solving puzzles, crosswords, and reading. I also enjoy cooking and Jim enjoys working in the yard and doing projects around the house.

What makes you and your family unique? We are unique in how we celebrate our Irish heritage with laughing, picnicking, and just being with extended family members decked in green and ready to party. I'm German, but was born on St. Patrick's Day, so that is why Jim said he married me.

What are your passions? Our main passion is our Catholic Faith. We enjoy participating in Church activities, especially Eucharistic Adoration, also Right to Life support and activities, but we are also passionate about being with family and friends to celebrate life.

What is your favorite part of being Catholic? Our favorite part of being Catholic is attending Mass, receiving Our Lord in the Eucharist, praying the Rosary with family and friends, and sharing our faith with others.

Taylor & Caitlin Dunn

How long have you been married? We were married on March 17th, 2018 and have been happily married for 5 years!

How many children do you have? Ages? We have one 2 year old daughter, Clare, who is adopted. She is definitely our little blessing and we are hopeful for more children through adoption as she is strong willed and needs the blessings and refinement that siblings provide haha.

How did you meet your spouse? To summarize, we met at a young adult group studying Pope John Paul 2nd's Theology of the Body. Both of us had already graduated college, were working our first professional jobs, and we were introduced by mutual friends. The full story of how we met is very funny and too long to elaborate here, but we love sharing it so feel free to ask!

What do each of you do for work? Taylor is a mechanical engineer working in the local area and Caitlin is a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (mental health counselor) working remotely for a private Christian counseling agency. We are both blessed to love the professions and jobs that we have!

What are your interests and hobbies? Taylor enjoys woodworking, bonsai, and international travel (23 countries so far). Interests are vast and wide, but has a deep appreciation for cultures, art (not modern art)/architecture, philosophy/theology, and many traditional handicrafts. Caitlin enjoys knitting, decorating our home, reading, sewing, and enjoying quality time with family and friends. She has also been blessed to travel to many countries (not quite as many as Taylor) and enjoy culture, beauty (such as art and architecture) and learning different languages. Interests include my hobbies, being the best wife and Mom I can be, supporting and enjoying my family and friends, and getting to know people and seeing them as God does!

What makes you and your family unique? Taylor- I suppose we both had strong upbringings and never strayed from the faith, and we both want to have a large family. Both seem to be outside the norm of current culture. Caitlin- one unique aspect of our family is that we are not originally from this area. Taylor is from Bellefontaine, Ohio and I am (basically) from Sandusky, Ohio but my Dad was in the Air Force until I was 14 years old so my family lived in many other States in the U.S. I agree with Taylor that our family desires to live lives of virtue and that leads us to make many choices that at this time have become "counter-cultural" and therefore unique. We are certainly not perfect, but do our best to keep God at the center of our family and to prioritize God and family as the central aspect of our lives, allowing those priorities to support our decisions in work and family schedule/ routine. Finally, another unique aspect to our family is that all of our children will more than likely need to come through the gift of adoption, and God has blessed us abundantly in that part of our family's journey so far.

What are your passions? Taylor- I have a passion for trying to grow in an appreciation of understanding of the human condition (nature) due to my many different experiences with cultures and languages. Caitlin - I share Taylor's passion for people and seeing God in each person I encounter each day. In addition to language and culture, I feel very blessed when I am able to hear people's stories and be a part of their life journey. My joke as a counselor is that random people would tell me their problems unprompted, so I may as well get paid for it. In all seriousness though, I am blessed that God guided me in discerning my charism/ gift of counsel and that I am able to use it almost every day with my job and with my family/ friends. I always knew that I wanted to be a wife and Mom, so I would also say that my family is my passion! Taylor and I both come from big families so that probably contributes to our passion for people, culture, and family/ friends.

What is your favorite part of being Catholic? Taylor- The depth of understanding our faith tradition, and how it is able to provide thoughtful answers to a world which seems to lack an adequate anthropology for man. If I ever want to have a deeper understanding of any particular aspect of the faith, there is never a lack of resources or insights throughout the ages to plumb in depth. Also the sacraments! Caitlin- I completely agree with Taylor! While we as people in the Catholic Church are far from perfect, I feel so abundantly blessed that God in His wisdom gave us the Church (including Scripture, the Magisterium, and the Sacraments) to guide us in our relationship with Him, and that He loves us so much that He calls us to participate in His divine life. On a very practical level, I also appreciate the ways that our Catholic culture simplifies so many aspects of life by providing a natural rhythm and routine to each day, week, and year, and how it provides a solid foundation for answering life's big and important questions.

Greg and Christina Schmiesing

We are Greg and Christina Schmiesing. We were married on Labor Day Monday (!)- 1997, so we are coming up on our 24th wedding anniversary and the beginning of our 25th year of marriage in 2021. We have seven children ages 22-15 - Five boys and two girls, four of whom are biological and three of whom are adopted (one at birth - domestic though of Asian and Ecuadorian descent and two biological brothers from Ethiopia adopted at ages 4 and 6). We like to joke that we have several "Irish Twins" from different continents. This year, we had five children at Lehman Catholic High School - A first for them and a hormonal/whirlwind of a year for us!

We both attended Franciscan University - Greg from Sidney, OH and Chrissy from Spokane, WA (Home to Gonzaga basketball if you are into March Madness). We actually met in the fall of our sophomore year in Gaming, Austria while we were studying abroad. We began dating a few months later while still in Austria and nearly two years later we became engaged. Our engagement was 9 months long.

Greg is a veterinarian. Greg initially worked in banking for three years after college before he/we decided to go back to vet school. We already had our two oldest children, so we lived in married/student housing at Washington State University. It was a wonderful time of multiple low-wage jobs for both of us to make ends meet. Being in grad school married with children is something we tell every young couple not to shy away from. It truly was a blessed time and an absolute blast for our young, small family. Chrissy taught and coached during the first year of marriage until she had to finish out the end of pregnancy/child #1 in the hospital with placenta previa, and has been a homemaker (and assistant at the veterinary clinic) since then. During veterinary school, she babysat, tutored, and managed the housing complex. Although we have been very blessed financially in life, during vet school we got to know what it was like to have nothing, even resorting to dumpster diving when the regular students left school and picking up coins in store parking lots to get treats for the kids. We truly count that experience as one of our most valuable. We have volunteered on school committees, parish committees (Holy Angels here and St. Michael's in Ft. Loramie during our five years there), at the Shelby County Right to Life office, and for the Women's Center of Sidney. We own a mini-farm with beef cattle, a few barn cats, and an indoor dog. We have milked cows and goats in the past, but are plenty busy with our small herd of heritage Red Poll cows. The property, animals, and our garden are lots of work for our family except when enjoying our relaxing Sundays.

All the above makes our family unique so we will skip that question.

Interests and hobbies for us have somewhat changed over the years. Both of us have enjoyed playing sports and watching sports- predominately Gonzaga basketball during March Madness and our children's sporting activities. We both enjoy reading, walking our property, and working with the animals. We also play music with the kids and love the spontaneous dance session and family karaoke nights with the occasional strobe lights in the living room. Chrissy enjoys making

meals for the family and has sewed at times in the past (some clothes, Christmas stockings, stick horses, etc.) and preserving food from the garden. Greg hunted deer while living out west and Chrissy hunts ducks and geese on our property. We enjoy watching family movies with our kids. Greg and Chrissy enjoy the occasional getaway/veterinary conference where we can regroup and gear up for parenting and work. Really, at this stage in life, most of our free time is with our kids and enjoying their activities, or taking Sunday hikes/drives and making pilgrimages as a family. One of our best, most wild, and wonderful times together was autumn of 2019 when we went back to Austria, Poland, Slovakia, and Italy to visit places we visited 25 years earlier while studying over there. We used our two oldest children as the excuse to splurge on the time off work and expense of going as they were studying at the very same study abroad program we did- a 14th-century Carthusian monastery in the foothills of the Austrian Alps. It was amazing...and providentially timed just a few months before COVID shut down the world.

We feel so blessed to be born into the Catholic faith as we often play a dinner-table game of, "If you weren't Catholic, what would you be?" Chrissy vacillates between Druid and Judaism due to her Irish/hippie/tree-hugging roots and her love of biblical history. Greg pretty much says he would be agnostic because he is naturally a cynic. We LOVE our faith and have continually been blessed by her teachings and sacraments. We are grateful for the example of our parents and that they passed on the faith to each of their children. All our siblings, spouses, nieces, and nephews are "still" Catholic. It is such a gift. We are so glad we have been spared some serious, silly, and stupid mistakes that we no doubt would have made if not for the Church's guidance. We pray as a family daily. The last few years, after all these years of marriage, we are hitting a good rhythm with our family prayer time, but it wasn't always that way. We love the saints, reading about them, praying novenas, different devotions, using sacramentals, and making pilgrimages, but truly, these things have all come at different times and seasons of our lives. Mostly, we are grateful for the sacraments - especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation. Marriage is such a gift, but it is difficult and there are better days, weeks, months, and years and worse days, weeks, months, and years, but the Church offers insights into the why, hows, what-nows, and we would be lost without her! Those vows of good times and bad, richer and poorer, sickness and health, till death do you part, really, really mean something, and we are blessed and committed to living this life together.

Sincerely and in the Hearts of Jesus, Mary and Joseph,

Greg and Christina Schmiesing

Kevin and Anne Schmiesing

We made our marriage vows at Holy Angels Church in Sidney on May 18, 1996, a week after Anne graduated from college. Kevin had completed his second of five years of graduate school on his way to a doctorate in American history. We spent our first years of marriage in Philadelphia as Kevin completed his degree. Next, we lived in Grand Rapids, Michigan, for six years, where Kevin worked for a nonprofit organization dedicated to connecting faith and economics. Since 2005, we've lived in Sidney, Kevin's hometown, where we enjoy the company of Kevin's extended family and a wonderful community of friends. Anne is from the semi-desert area of eastern Oregon, which still holds many charms for her, but after studying with Kevin at Franciscan University of Steubenville, she found he charmed her even more. Despite the long distance separating our homes, we found that we shared similar backgrounds, values, and goals. Both of us were raised in devout Catholic families in rural areas characterized by a family-friendly culture.

We have seven children, ages 24 to 10 (as of 2021) and one daughter-in-law. Caring for our children has been Anne's primary vocation: striving to give them consistent care while infants, homeschooling them through the eighth grade, and then enrolling them at Lehman Catholic for the high school years. Until recently, Kevin continued to work for his Grand Rapids employer from a distance but has now established an editing business. He also teaches Church history for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati's Lay Ecclesial Ministry Program, produces a podcast on Church history, and appears on a weekly segment on Catholic radio to talk about history. He also devotes time to home improvements and gardening. Anne is currently the program director for Right to Life of Shelby County, but also does commissioned artwork and statue restoration.

We have both been deeply involved in our children's activities in music and athletics, including band, school musicals, soccer, cross country, and track. Kevin has coached soccer at various levels for ten years; Anne has joined in coaching for a few of those years. We both love singing and have sung together in choirs in college and at Holy Angels. We also enjoy reading, watching movies, hiking, and sports. We often do these things together as a family, even occasionally reading a book aloud together. Our travel destinations are usually state or national parks, sometimes en route to Colorado and Oregon to visit Anne's family. We both enjoy cooking and baking. Anne has primary management of meals, but Kevin relieves her regularly. Kevin's interest in baking desserts increased as Anne's interest in nutrition increased and the sweets served were not as sweet as he would have liked!

Kevin's experience as a historian and Anne's as an artist help us recognize the importance of looking at things from different perspectives. This is particularly true in relationships where differences can cause rifts if not tempered by virtue. We believe in the enduring bonds of Christian marriage and familial love, as well as the immense power of forgiveness and reconciliation modeled in the Church. This has helped us experience the abundant joy of married life and support each other during difficult times; it has also allowed us to provide hope to other families struggling through serious marital and familial trials. For us, both sets of our

parents have been positive models of married faithfulness and parental steadfastness. We recognize how fortunate we have been and desire to share that grace with others.

The Catholic Church has been at the center of our lives. Kevin is captivated by the rich history and culture of Catholicism. He loves learning and teaching about people, places, and events in the Catholic past and reflecting on how they influence the present. For Anne, there is no other place where such profound peace can be found as in the presence of our Lord, in church, especially at Sunday and weekday Masses. Our relationships with family and friends teach us much about our relationship with God, but more importantly, God teaches us how to genuinely love ourselves, each other, and our neighbor. Although like everyone else we constantly fall short in our practice of this love, our bond is strengthened by our commitment to Christ, his Church, and the integrity of our family.