

# Steps to Convalidation

## CONVALIDATIONS

What does the Convalidation of a marriage mean?

For various reasons a Catholic party or parties find themselves in a civil marriage or in a marriage that took place before a non-Catholic minister without the knowledge or permission of the Catholic Church or in a common-law marriage. In time, some seek to have their marriages approved or 'blessed' by the Catholic Church. When this can be accomplished, the ceremony that constitutes the marriage as a true sacramental union is called a convalidation. A convalidation involves the willingness of both parties to make a new act of the will to enter into a valid Catholic marriage. Because of the number of variables involved in convalidation situations, such as possible previous marriages to other parties, the length of time married civilly, and the reasons which led to the choice to marry outside of the church the first time, each convalidation case is unique. Please contact Theresa in the Parish Office for more detailed and personalized information for your particular case. The forms and documents that make up the Convalidation paperwork include:

1. Prenuptial questionnaire (filled out with priest)
2. Freedom to Marry form for each party witnessed and signed by person who has known party since early adolescence (filled out by family member or close friend)
3. Current (within six months) copy of baptismal certificate with notations for Catholic party
4. Copy of Marriage certificate for present marriage
5. Completion of parish or diocesan marriage preparation/enrichment program
6. Petition for Dispensation from Canonical Form for Mixed Marriage (if applicable)
7. Proof of invalidity of prior bond (s) (if applicable) \*

For more information or to make an appointment, please call the Parish Office at 972-542-7170.

## \*ANNULMENTS

The process involved in seeking an annulment through the Catholic Church is best explained in person; however, a brief explanation is below.

The Catholic Church believes that marriage is a lifetime exclusive partnership between a man and a woman, who give and receive mutual help and love and, from their union, bring forth and rear children. When Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians marry according to the requirements of their churches, and when people of other religions marry according to the requirements of civil law, the Catholic Church presumes that they marry validly. If both spouses are baptized, the Church also considers their marriage to be a sacrament and believes that, once consummated, it cannot be set aside by any human power, including a civil court.

Because it is a lifetime commitment, the decision to marry is one of the most serious decisions most people ever make. Since so much of the person is invested in this decision and since so much is expected in terms of time, energy, emotion and resources, when a couple marries, divorce is unthinkable. Yet, the unthinkable does happen to many couples; thus, the Catholic Church seeks to minister to divorced people.

While supporting the permanence of marriage, the Church offers to review the broken marriage to determine whether there could have been something defective from the beginning. Perhaps on the wedding day the marriage lacked one or more of the elements which the Catholic Church considers essential for valid marriage. If that can be proven, the Church can declare the marriage invalid, indicating that it never had the permanent binding force of marriage. A Church declaration of invalidity, then, is a decision by the Church, based on proof, that on the wedding day a particular union lacked some element essential to marriage. Such decisions are sought and given through the Tribunal, the Church Court established in a Diocese to assist the Bishop in giving timely judgment to both parties.

In studying and deciding petitions for declarations of invalidity, the Tribunal seeks only the spiritual good of the people involved. The Tribunal makes no attempt to assign blame for the breakup of the union. A Church declaration of invalidity does not have civil effects. ***A decision for invalidity does not make children illegitimate.*** It cannot be used to question a child's paternity. It will not influence a civil court to set or change terms of civil divorce, child custody, support or property settlement. If a marriage is declared invalid by the Tribunal, the spouses, so far as that marriage is concerned, are free to marry others in the Catholic Church once all stipulations placed by the Tribunal have been fulfilled. As a result of that freedom, the Catholic spouse or spouses in the new union are able to participate fully in the life of their Church.

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