

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ANNULMENT PROCESS

What are the steps I have to go through to get an annulment?

The first and most important step is to contact Fr. Chris or Deacon Jim. They will help you through the process. Together you will prepare the Petition for Nullity and then submit it to the Metropolitan Tribunal for consideration.

There are four main tasks in preparing the petition – two easy, one medium and one hard.

First the easy tasks:

You will need to get certified copies of your marriage license and divorce decree from the county you were married and divorced in respectively. Usually you just send them a check for the copy and they mail it to you.

You will need to provide a contact address for your ex-spouse. If there is a difficulty in contacting them, you should talk to Fr. Chris or Deacon Jim for specifics.

Second, the medium task:

You will need to provide the names and addresses of five people who knew you (and your ex-spouse) at the time of your marriage. They will be asked to provide information about your marriage to the Tribunal. Again, Fr. Chris and Deacon Jim can give you more information about this.

Finally the hard one:

You will need to tell the story of your marriage by answering a series of focus questions. This is a rather lengthy process and Fr. Chris or Deacon Jim will be your coach.

About how long does it take to get the annulment?

Many factors affect the length of time including the length of the marriage, how quickly your witnesses respond and the complexity of the case. As a rule of thumb you should expect about a year once the petition is submitted. If you are thinking of getting engaged, you must secure the annulment before you can set a wedding date.

My fiancée is divorced but not Catholic. Will they need an annulment?

Yes. If they have a prior marriage it will need to be investigated, even if they are not Catholic.

I am already divorced; why do I need an annulment to re-marry?

The Church teaches that sacramental marriage is a permanent bond that cannot be dissolved. Your divorce is a civil – not a Church – declaration. We need to investigate your marriage to see if a sacrament occurred. If there was no sacrament, your prior marriage can be declared “null” and you can re-marry.

But I was married by a Catholic priest in a Catholic church? How could a sacrament not occur?

The priest was only the witness to your marriage. You and your prior spouse are the ones who performed the sacrament by your public exchange of consent. If there was an obstacle to or a defect in that exchange, a sacrament may not have occurred. That is why the marriage needs to be investigated.

If a sacrament did not occur, what about my children? Does their status change if my marriage is declared null?

Absolutely not. Since you did perform a wedding and then lived together as husband and wife, the church recognizes that the union is a “natural” marriage. The status of children born of that marriage is not affected by the annulment. Likewise any obligations arising from the marriage and divorce (property settlement, child custody or child support payments) are binding and still must be observed.

How much does it cost to get an annulment?

In the Archdiocese of Detroit, there is no fee for an annulment. You need only pay for the required documents, a certified copy of your marriage license and divorce decree – usually under forty dollars. Your Catholic Services Appeal (CSA) contributions make this possible so all that is asked is that you be as generous as possible to the CSA.

I am divorced and want to get married. My ex-spouse is deceased. Do I still need an annulment?

No. Marriage is until “death do you part.” All that is required is a copy of the death certificate for your prior spouse.