

For Catholics Experiencing Divorce and for All of Us Who Wish to Support Them...

Fact #1:

Divorced Catholics are full members of the Catholic Church and are invited to participate fully in the life of the Church.

There are no laws preventing a divorced Catholic who has not remarried from active participation within a parish. This includes receiving Eucharist and Reconciliation or participating as a Lector, Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, Parish Council Member, etc. Catholics who are divorced and who have remarried without a declaration of nullity, are not free to receive the sacraments, but are encouraged to practice other aspects of their faith, pending a decision by the tribunal regarding their former marriage.

Fact #2:

Divorced Catholics are not excommunicated.

Pope John Paul II called upon all pastors and laity to help the divorced to not consider themselves as separated from the Church. Though a Catholic who divorces and remarries without an annulment is considered to be in an irregular marriage and is not open to receive the Eucharist, he or she is not excommunicated.

Fact #3:

Two people must not remain in a marriage at all costs.

Church law states that if either of the spouses causes "serious danger of spirit or body to the other spouse or the children, or otherwise renders common life too hard," the spouses may separate (c1153.1). The Church is always concerned that human life must be protected from things that would destroy it. If the marriage relationship is threatening the life or well-being of one of the parties or the children, or if the continuation of the relationship has truly become intolerable, then the Church reminds us of our responsibility to protect human life in all its form, and allows for the separation of the spouses.

Fact #4:

The children of a divorced and remarried Catholic without an annulment can be baptized in the Church.

Every unbaptized person, and only such a person can be baptized (c864). There are, however, some conditions: For an infant to be baptized lawfully it is required that at least one parent or the person who lawfully holds the place of the parent, gives their consent and that there be a well-founded hope that the child will be brought up in the Catholic religion (c868).

Fact #5:

Children are not illegitimate after an annulment.

"Legitimacy" is a civil issue concerning a child's paternity. Children born of a legitimate civil marriage which is later declared "null" by the Church are always legitimate and enjoy full rights and privileges of the civil law.

Fact #6:

Annulments can't be bought.

Canon Law has always provided for those who cannot afford the administrative costs by dismissing or lowering the fee. In the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, the annulment process now exists without cost.



If I am divorced, how do I begin the annulment process?

- If your marriage ended in divorce, you can petition the Tribunal of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia for a Declaration of Nullity.
- The Tribunal is looking to see if something was lacking in the intentions of the parties in regards to children, fidelity and permanence, and/or in their understanding of marriage, and/or in their ability to enter into and fulfill marriage.
- Anyone can begin the process now from the ease of their own computer. Go to www.archphila.org. On the top right of the webpage, under the heading, "How do I", click on the tab "Start the Annulment Process."
- Follow the instructions, fill out the form on the computer, print out the form, obtain the proper documents and send everything to the Tribunal.
- When your application is received you will be contacted to begin your case with formal testimony.
- The normal annulment process takes 6 to 8 months.
- Archbishop Charles Chaput, in accord with the wishes of Pope Francis, has decreed that the annulment process now exists without cost. Parishes across the Archdiocese of Philadelphia contribute to the Metropolitan Tribunal in order to absorb the \$800.00 administrative fee. Petitioners are only asked to donate something out of charity according to their means.
- If you are seeking spiritual and pastoral support concerning your divorce, please contact our pastor or one of our permanent deacons at 215-721-0199. We are here for you!

"I think we have to be better at reaching out to divorced Catholics so they don't think that they're immediately excluded from the Church because they've been divorced and remarried. Some people think that even when they get a divorce they're not welcome in the Church. So I think we need to work on that."
Archbishop Charles J. Chaput