

TRIBUNAL

DIOCESE OF LAKE CHARLES

P. O. Box 3223
Lake Charles, LA 70602
(337) 439-7400

PETITION FOR DECLARATION OF NULLITY OF MARRIAGE

Table of Contents

1. Introduction to the Process.....	2
2. Information Forms: Petitioner, Respondent, and Marriage.....	3
3. Petition Guide.....	17
4. PETITION.....	19
5. Witness Information Forms.....	20
6. Policy Statement.....	23
7. Confidentiality Statement.....	24
8. Case Initiator Verification.....	25
9. Application Checklist.....	26

Instructions for Downloading and Completing the Petition

1. **Download the Petition Form.** Click the download link to save the fillable PDF to your computer or device before you begin. *Do not fill out the form in your web browser, as changes may not save properly.*
2. **Open the PDF with a PDF Reader.** Use a reliable PDF reader such as **Adobe Acrobat Reader** (free to download at get.adobe.com/reader) to open the file.
3. **Fill Out the Form.** Click on the highlighted fields to enter your information. The form is designed to automatically copy repeated information (such as your name or address) where needed.
4. **Save Your Completed Petition.** After filling out the form, go to **File > Save As** to save a copy of your completed petition to your device.
5. **Print the Petition.** Once the form is complete and saved, print a copy of the petition. *Make sure all information appears clearly on the printed version before finalizing with signatures for submission.*



INTRODUCTION TO THE PROCESS

The process for a Declaration of Nullity of a marriage can be confusing. The first thing that you should know is that this process is nothing like civil divorce. Civil divorce dissolves the civil bonds of marriage. This "declaration of nullity" process does not dissolve a marriage; instead, it seeks to determine if the marriage was invalid, that is, it seeks to determine whether one or more essential elements of marriage were missing or defective at the time of the wedding. The Church always presumes that a marriage is valid, but if a judicial investigation determines that one or more of these elements was missing or defective, the marriage is declared null.

Thus, if you have already civilly divorced and either party believes the union to be invalid, you may petition the Tribunal to consider the issue. This is true whether or not you are Catholic and whether or not you have subsequently attempted to enter other unions.

There are a number of steps in this process. The more important ones for you are:

1. The application: these forms and the documents requested
 - Once completed, the forms are given to your case Initiator (priest, deacon, etc.).
2. A letter informing you of the Tribunal's decision to accept or reject the petition
3. If your Petition is accepted, a letter will be sent to your former spouse to:
 - inform him/her that the process has been initiated and
 - ask if he/she wishes to submit testimony and witnesses.
4. You and your witnesses will come together to give testimony.
5. Publication of the Acts: both parties will be invited to review the evidence that has been collected and, if need be, to put forth objections and/or additional evidence.
6. Both parties are informed of the judgment rendered.

Please remember that the process for a Declaration of Nullity is not about "blaming" anyone for the failure of the marriage. The process simply investigates whether or not there is sufficient proof to determine if the marriage was invalid.

As you begin this process, you should keep in mind that there is no guarantee that a declaration of nullity will be granted. Although it is not possible for the Tribunal to provide a timeframe in which the case will be completed, your case will move through the judicial process more speedily if all forms and documents are filled out entirely and to the best of your ability and if you and your witnesses appear before the Tribunal to provide testimony in a timely manner. This information will provide the basis on which your case will be adjudicated.

Please contact the Tribunal or your case Initiator if you have any questions.

Petitioner (you)

☐

I AFFIRM BEFORE GOD AND MY CONSCIENCE THAT ALL OF
THE INFORMATION I PROVIDE HEREIN IS TRUE AND COMPLETE.

CONTACT INFORMATION

☐

Male

☐

Female

Title

First Name

Middle Name

Current Last Name

Maiden Name

Address

City

Parish/County

State

ZIP

Country

Email

Home/Cell Number

Occupation

BAPTISMAL INFORMATION

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy)

Place of Birth (City, State, Country)

Before the marriage, were you ever baptized?

☐

Yes

☐

No

☐

Unknown

If 'yes', in which church or denomination were you baptized?

Date of Baptism (mm/dd/yyyy), OR year

Church or Parish of Baptism

Address

Religion/denomination at the time of the wedding

Current religion/denomination

Current parish/congregation

Address

Is there any Eastern Rite
(Catholic or Orthodox) affiliation
in your family background?

☐

Byzantine

☐

Ruthenian

☐

Ukrainian

☐

Armenian

☐

Maronite

☐

Syrian

☐

No Affiliation

☐

Respondent (the former spouse to the marriage)

CONTACT INFORMATION

☐

Male

☐

Female

Title

First Name

Middle Name

Current Last Name

Maiden Name

Address

City

Parish/County

State

ZIP

Country

Email

Home/Cell Number

Occupation

IMPORTANT: You **must** provide the complete current mailing address for the Respondent. Without this information, the case may not be accepted.

I confirm that, to my knowledge, I have entered the Respondent's complete current address.

I am uncertain of the address. [See Page 11.](#)

BAPTISMAL INFORMATION

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy)

Place of Birth (City, State, Country)

Is there any Eastern Rite
(Catholic or Orthodox) affiliation
in the Respondent's family background?

Before the marriage, was the Respondent ever baptized?

☐

Yes

☐

No

☐

Unknown

If 'yes', in which church or denomination was the Respondent baptized?

Date of Baptism (mm/dd/yyyy), OR year

Church or Parish of Baptism

Address

Religion/denomination at the time of the wedding

Current religion/denomination

Current parish/congregation

Address

☐

Byzantine

☐

Ruthenian

☐

Ukrainian

☐

Armenian

☐

Maronite

☐

Syrian

☐

No Affiliation

☐

General Timeline of Marriage

To the best of your ability, please provide specific dates. Later on, you will be asked to provide some of this information again. This timeline will help you to gather and/or recall this information and will provide the Tribunal with a succinct record of events.

DATE (mm/dd/yyyy) EVENTS relating to you and your former spouse

	<i>Date of your baptism</i>
	<i>Date of your former spouse's baptism</i>
	<i>When did you first meet?</i>
	<i>When did you begin dating?</i>
	<i>When did you get engaged?</i>
	<i>When did you first begin living together?</i>
	<i>When did you get married?</i>
	<i>If you were first married in a civil ceremony then later married in the Catholic Church, when was the church ceremony?</i>
	<i>How long were you married when problems began?</i>
	<i>When was your first separation?</i>
	<i>How long was the longest separation during the marriage?</i>
	<i>When was your final separation?</i>
	<i>When did you divorce?</i>

Date of Birth Children shared with former spouse

	1.
	2.
	3.
	4.
	5.

Courtship and Wedding

Typed answers are preferred over handwritten answers.

Briefly, when and how did you and the Respondent meet? Date: _____

We participated in the following marriage preparation program:

How long was your courtship before you decided to marry? _____

Was there a formal engagement period before the wedding? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If 'yes', date of engagement: _____ If 'yes', length of engagement: _____

Did you and the Respondent live together (cohabit) prior to the wedding? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If 'yes', for how long before marriage? _____

If 'yes', did this have any effect on your decision to marry?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If 'yes', please explain.

Was there a pregnancy or suspicion of pregnancy prior to this wedding? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If 'yes', did this have any effect on your decision to marry?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If 'yes', please explain.

Did you and the Respondent enter into a pre-nuptial agreement? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If 'yes', please attach a copy of the agreement.

Marriage was performed or witnessed by: ☐ Catholic priest/deacon ☐ Civil official ☐ Other religious official ☐ Other (indicate by whom)

Exact date of the wedding in question: _____

Church or place of marriage

Name of priest, minister, or officiant

Address

City

State

ZIP

Country

Where was the civil marriage license obtained?

Parish/ County

State

Country

If a civil marriage preceded the church wedding, date of convalidation or "blessing" (mm/dd/yyyy): _____

Why did you have your marriage convalidated at that time?

Church or parish

City

State

ZIP

Country

Name of priest or deacon

Have you ever petitioned for an annulment for this marriage before?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If 'yes', in which diocese?

Separation and Divorce

Typed answers are preferred over handwritten answers.

Approximately how long were you married to the Respondent before the **final** separation? _____

Number of separations during the marriage: _____ Approximate date of **first** separation: _____

Briefly, what brought about the **first** separation?

*If there were any **other** separations before the final one, please briefly list/describe.*

Briefly, what brought about the **final** separation?

Date of **final** separation: _____ Date of civil divorce: _____

On what grounds was the suit for divorce brought? _____

_____ Name of Court granting divorce or annulment	_____ Parish/County	Who applied for the divorce?
_____ State	_____ Country, if applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> I did <input type="checkbox"/> The Respondent did

Children

How many children were born during your marriage to the Respondent? _____

How many did you adopt? _____ *If any, please list in what year(s).* _____

If there were no children born during the marriage, why not?

How many children are still minors today? _____ If any, who has custody? ☐ Me ☐ Respondent ☐ Other _____

Have you been fulfilling your obligations of visitations/custody of the children? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Has the Respondent been fulfilling the obligations of visitations/custody of the children? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you obligated to pay child and/or spousal support assessed by the civil courts? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If 'yes', are these being met? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Is the Respondent obligated to pay child and/or spousal support assessed by the civil courts? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If 'yes', are these being met? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please briefly describe any ongoing or pending litigation in the civil courts between you and the Respondent.

Are any of the following currently in effect between you and the Respondent? *If any, please describe the events that led up to it.* ☐ Protection-from-abuse order ☐ Restraining order ☐ Similar court order

Your Current Status

Typed answers are preferred over handwritten answers.

What is your current status? ☐ Single ☐ Engaged ☐ Civilly Remarried

*If you are engaged or civilly remarried, please provide the following for your **intended/current spouse**:*

☐ Male ☐ Female

Title First Name Middle Name

Current Last Name Maiden Name

Address City

Parish/County State ZIP Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy)

Religion of intended/current spouse

If Christian, what is the date of your intended/current spouse's Baptism? _____

Did your intended/current spouse ever change religions? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Is this your only marriage since your marriage to the Respondent? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Was your intended/current spouse ever married before (in either a civil or religious ceremony)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If not Catholic, are either you or your intended/current spouse enrolled in a Catholic OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation) program? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Name of Parish

City State

Your Other Marriages

Typed answers are preferred over handwritten answers.

*If you were married at any time **before or after** marrying the Respondent, complete the following for each and every marriage.*

Marriage #1 <hr/> <i>Name of Spouse</i> <hr/> <i>Date of Wedding</i> <hr/> <i>Location (City, State, Country)</i>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Type of Ceremony</i></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Civil </div> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Was this the first marriage for your spouse?</i></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No </div> <p style="text-align: center; color: red;"><i>If 'no', list # of prior marriages</i> → _____</p>	<hr/> <i>If applicable, date of spouse's death</i> <hr/> <i>If applicable, place of spouse's death</i> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Was this marriage declared null by the Catholic Church?</i></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No </div> <p style="text-align: center; color: red;"><i>If 'yes', provide Tribunal location, case number, or date, if known.</i></p>
Marriage #2 <hr/> <i>Name of Spouse</i> <hr/> <i>Date of Wedding</i> <hr/> <i>Location (City, State, Country)</i>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Type of Ceremony</i></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Civil </div> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Was this the first marriage for your spouse?</i></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No </div> <p style="text-align: center; color: red;"><i>If 'no', list # of prior marriages</i> → _____</p>	<hr/> <i>If applicable, date of spouse's death</i> <hr/> <i>If applicable, place of spouse's death</i> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Was this marriage declared null by the Catholic Church?</i></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No </div> <p style="text-align: center; color: red;"><i>If 'yes', provide Tribunal location, case number, or date, if known.</i></p>
Marriage #3 <hr/> <i>Name of Spouse</i> <hr/> <i>Date of Wedding</i> <hr/> <i>Location (City, State, Country)</i>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Type of Ceremony</i></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Civil </div> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Was this the first marriage for your spouse?</i></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No </div> <p style="text-align: center; color: red;"><i>If 'no', list # of prior marriages</i> → _____</p>	<hr/> <i>If applicable, date of spouse's death</i> <hr/> <i>If applicable, place of spouse's death</i> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Was this marriage declared null by the Catholic Church?</i></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No </div> <p style="text-align: center; color: red;"><i>If 'yes', provide Tribunal location, case number, or date, if known.</i></p>

If you have Final Decrees from another Court or Tribunal regarding the nullity/dissolution of any other marriages, please attach them to this petition.

Respondent's Other Marriages

Typed answers are preferred over handwritten answers.

*If the Respondent was married at any time **before or after** marrying you, complete the following for each and every marriage.*

Marriage #1	Type of Ceremony <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Civil	<hr/> If applicable, date of this spouse's death
<hr/> Name of Respondent's Spouse		<hr/> If applicable, place of this spouse's death
<hr/> Date of Wedding	Was this the first marriage for this spouse? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Was this marriage declared null by the Catholic Church? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<hr/> Location (City, State, Country)	<i>If 'no', list # of prior marriages</i> → _____	<i>If 'yes', provide Tribunal location, case number, or date, if known.</i>
Marriage #2	Type of Ceremony <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Civil	<hr/> If applicable, date of this spouse's death
<hr/> Name of Respondent's Spouse		<hr/> If applicable, place of this spouse's death
<hr/> Date of Wedding	Was this the first marriage for this spouse? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Was this marriage declared null by the Catholic Church? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<hr/> Location (City, State, Country)	<i>If 'no', list # of prior marriages</i> → _____	<i>If 'yes', provide Tribunal location, case number, or date, if known.</i>
Marriage #3	Type of Ceremony <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Civil	<hr/> If applicable, date of this spouse's death
<hr/> Name of Respondent's Spouse		<hr/> If applicable, place of this spouse's death
<hr/> Date of Wedding	Was this the first marriage for this spouse? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Was this marriage declared null by the Catholic Church? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<hr/> Location (City, State, Country)	<i>If 'no', list # of prior marriages</i> → _____	<i>If 'yes', provide Tribunal location, case number, or date, if known.</i>

If you have Final Decrees from another Court or Tribunal regarding the nullity/dissolution of any other marriages, please attach them to this petition.

Your Efforts to Locate Your Former Spouse

Typed answers are preferred over handwritten answers.

IMPORTANT. If you are unable to provide the Tribunal with a complete current address for the Respondent, please complete the questions below. In some cases it may not be possible to accept the case without this information. **You must provide documentation for all searches and investigations attempted.**

First name of the other spouse in question	Middle Name	Last Name	
Has this person ever been known by another name? (for example, a maiden name, an alias, a former name)			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
If 'yes', please list all known names and when they were used:			<input type="checkbox"/> No
First	Middle	Last	Dates when name was used

When was your last contact with the Respondent? _____ ☐ in person ☐ by phone ☐ by mail/email

Last known address of the Respondent	City	State	ZIP
--------------------------------------	------	-------	-----

Country, if applicable	Current Telephone	Email
------------------------	-------------------	-------

When was the last time you knew the Respondent to be at the above address? _____

If unknown, please provide the Respondent's last known number.

☐ Work ☐ Home ☐ Cell

Last known employment: employer or company	Address
--	---------

City	State	ZIP
------	-------	-----

Please provide addresses of relatives of the Respondent who could be contacted to forward correspondence.

If you had children, please explain why one of these could not provide you with current contact information for the Respondent.

Below, please list in detail what efforts you have made to locate the Respondent's current address.

Cities/towns for which you looked in telephone books (available at libraries) or called Directory Assistance:	Date last checked: _____
Names and contact information for attorneys, investigators or other professionals you contacted for help:	
Names and contact information for mutual friends, in-laws, former neighbors, co-workers, etc. you contacted:	
Online search engines and paid services you used to try to locate the Respondent (give web addresses, print and attach your results):	
Other efforts you made, and when:	

Preparing Your Petition

Typed answers are preferred over handwritten answers.

The following pages contain several brief questions, which will help the Tribunal to propose grounds for nullity. These questions may also guide you in your understanding of possible grounds. Please answer these questions in the space provided below. The tribunal Judges will determine the actual ground(s) for the case, usually after hearing from the Respondent, and will then inform you.

*Please remember that **it is not necessary to go into great detail in answering the following questions.** These are preliminary questions only, and you will later have the opportunity to give in-depth answers to questions relevant to your case. One or two-word responses, however, are not sufficient.*

*Please also remember that if your marriage was later **convalidated** or **“blessed”** in the Catholic Church, these questions refer to the time of that convalidation or “blessing”, not to the civil wedding.*

COURTSHIP AND DECISION TO MARRY

When and how did you and the Respondent meet?

Briefly, what else was happening in your life at the time you met the Respondent?

Briefly, what else was happening in the Respondent's life at the time you met?

Who brought up the topic of marriage, and under what circumstances?

Typed answers are preferred over handwritten answers.

Did anything specific, or anything unusual, occur that prompted your decision to marry?

Was there any pressure on either party to get married? ☐ Yes ☐ No *If so, please explain.*

How did you and the Respondent get engaged?

Was the engagement ever cancelled or broken? ☐ Yes ☐ No *If so, briefly explain the circumstances, and how and why you reconciled.*

Was there any force used or fear instilled (internal or external) to marry the Respondent, or for the Respondent to marry you? ☐ Yes ☐ No *If so, please explain.*

YOUR CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE ITSELF

At the time of your marriage, did you envision any event or circumstance that would allow you to end the marriage and enter into another marriage? ☐ Yes ☐ No *Explain.*

To your knowledge did the Respondent envision any such event or circumstance? ☐ Yes ☐ No *Explain.*

Typed answers are preferred over handwritten answers.

Prior to this marriage, did you know many family members or friends who were divorced? ☐ Yes ☐ No *Please describe your experience.*

Did the Respondent know many family members or friends who were divorced? ☐ Yes ☐ No *Please describe what you know.*

Do you believe that you and the Respondent shared the same notion of marriage at the time of the wedding? ☐ Yes ☐ No *Please explain your answer.*

Please complete the following, as you would have at the time of your marriage:

Marriage “until death do us part” means...

Before the wedding, what had you and the Respondent discussed and decided about having children in the marriage?

Did you both share the same ideas and decisions about having children in the marriage? ☐ Yes ☐ No *Please explain your answer.*

Did either you or your former spouse reserve the right to determine when/if to attempt to have children? ☐ Yes ☐ No *If so, please explain.*

Typed answers are preferred over handwritten answers.

Did either of you place conditions on when to attempt to have children (e.g., if the marriage is successful, if a certain financial stability is reached, if a certain career goal is attained)? ☐ Yes ☐ No *If so, please explain.*

Did you make a plan regarding the delaying of children through any means or method of birth control or some form of sterilization? If so, what was the plan? Was it carried out? Who used birth control and for how long? Who had the sterilization?

Leading up to the wedding, was either of you sexually active with someone else? ☐ Yes ☐ No *If so, please explain.*

Was infidelity a problem in your marriage to the Respondent? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If so, by which spouse, or both?

If either or both were unfaithful, please answer the following:

What was the act?

When did the first act of infidelity occur?

Was infidelity a continuing problem? ☐ Yes ☐ No *If so, please elaborate.*

At the time of the marriage, did you believe that infidelity gives a spouse the right to end the marriage and enter another? ☐ Yes ☐ No *If so, please explain.*

Typed answers are preferred over handwritten answers.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Please explain briefly what problems, issues, or factors you believe caused this marriage to fail, and when each first appeared.

Were you aware of any of the above problems or issues before the wedding? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If so, please explain why you did not consider the problem(s) serious at that time, or why you decided to marry nevertheless.

*What would the Respondent say was **your** role in the problems and breakdown of the marriage?*

What was the Respondent's role?

When did you stop living together as husband and wife?

What led up to the final separation?

Did you discover, after the wedding, something relevant to the marriage that had been hidden or not disclosed before the wedding? ☐ Yes ☐ No *If so, please explain.*

Did you or the Respondent marry for a reason other than marriage itself (e.g., a pregnancy, a green card, etc.)? ☐ Yes ☐ No *If so, please explain.*

Was there any condition set prior to the wedding by either you or the Respondent to be fulfilled by either of you after the wedding? ☐ Yes ☐ No *If so, please explain.*

Petition Guide

*The Petition form is at the end of this section. On this form, there is a box in which you will be asked to write a very brief description of why you think the marriage was not valid and binding from the beginning. There are a number of elements that can cause a marriage to be invalid. These are called **grounds or reasons for nullity** and can be found below. These grounds will help you to prepare your formal Petition. Please carefully review the grounds listed and try to determine which, if any, may apply to your situation. The priest, deacon, or advocate assisting you can also help you to determine if any of these apply to your case. **This checklist must be included with your annulment application.***

*Remember that any basis or circumstance for a declaration of nullity **must have existed from the very beginning of the marriage**, that is, on the day of the wedding or on the day of the convalidation of the wedding (“blessing” of the marriage).*

Please indicate whether or not the following existed on the day of the wedding:

If at the time of your wedding you did not hold that your marriage would be an exclusive union... that is one or both of you considered the marriage “open” or considered it acceptable to have other sexual partners during your future marriage, you could write, *“an intention against exclusivity.”*

If at the time of the wedding one or both of you decided to exclude the possibility of having children during the duration of your marriage, or if you and/or the other party mutually or unilaterally decided to postpone having children until some indeterminate time or condition was met, or if you always used some means of contraception to prevent pregnancy, you could write, *“the exclusion of children.”*

If there was a pre-marital pregnancy... If the fact or suspicion of a pre-marital pregnancy caused the decision to marry, this might be a factor. Did you feel pressured to marry because of the pregnancy, whether it was internal pressure or pressure from someone else? If so, you could write, *“pressure to marry because of pregnancy.”*

If at the time of the wedding there were serious problems with addictions... If the problems affected one or both of you in your decision making ability, or in your ability to function normally, or if they prevented one or both of you from being able to fulfill the basic obligations of marriage, you could write, *“alcohol (and/or drug) abuse which prevented fulfilling the basic obligations of marriage,”* or *“alcohol (and/or drug) abuse which prevented sound decision-making at the time of marriage.”* It is important to state when the addiction started.

If psychological/psychiatric illness affected the party(ies) or marriage... A person must be capable of living out the commitment of marriage, including being a spouse and a parent, even with illness. If serious psychiatric illness prevented either you or your former spouse from understanding or fulfilling the basic obligations of marriage, you could write, *“serious psychiatric or psychological illness which prevented the fulfillment of the basic obligations of marriage.”*

If fraud led to the marriage... If you or your former spouse had been told a lie in order to convince you to marry, or if something important was intentionally concealed in order to get you to marry, you could write, *"fraud intended to lead to marriage."*

If at the time of your marriage, you or your former spouse did not hold that your marriage was "until death"... If in fact you or your former spouse excluded from your marriage all probability of marital permanence, you can write, *"exclusion of the permanence of marriage."*

If homosexuality was an issue in the marriage... Homosexuality is not a ground of invalidity in itself, but confusion over sexuality and self-image can prevent or interfere with the marital relationship and marital intimacy. If this was a factor in the marriage, you could write, *"inability to fulfill the obligations of a (husband/wife) because of homosexuality."* It is important to include whether homosexual feelings or confusion existed prior to the marriage, how soon into the marriage this became a problem, and whether the marriage ended principally because of homosexuality.

If you did not intend to marry at all... Sometimes a couple will go through a legal or religious marriage ceremony for a reason connected with immigration, insurance, or finances, and not out of the idea of marriage itself. In other words, they were pretending to marry. If such was the case in this marriage, you could write, *"simulation of marriage for reasons of (immigration/insurance/_____)."*

If one or both of you entered this marriage against your will... If either spouse, or both, did not agree to marry freely but because of some force, or out of fear (even a deep-seated fear of displeasing someone important to you such as a parent or clergyman), you could write, *"force (or fear) to enter marriage."* This might apply also if the marriage was arranged (as happens in some cultures) and you or your spouse did not want to marry.

Error of person or error of quality principally and directly intended... If your former spouse falsified his or her identity at the time of marriage, such that you thought you were marrying a different person, you could write, *"error of person."* If in choosing to marry your former spouse you were actually focused primarily on some quality that you thought the other had (i.e., she is a doctor, he is a Catholic), but later discovered that he or she was not, and you or the Respondent desired that quality more than marriage itself, you could write, *"error principally and directly intended,"* also indicating the quality about which you were in error.

Condition... If you placed any condition on the marriage — either concerning the past, present or future, you could write, *"past/present/future condition,"* also indicating what the condition concerned and whether or not the condition was actually fulfilled.

ATTENTION. The next page is the **most important page** in this application.

For your case to be accepted, you must fill it out completely.

PETITION

Typed answers are preferred over handwritten answers.

PETITIONER

Your full name (also family name, if applicable)

Address

RESPONDENT

Full name of spouse to this marriage

I, the undersigned Petitioner, do hereby request that the Tribunal of the Diocese of Lake Charles accept this petition to pronounce, according to the Canon Law of the Catholic Church, that the marriage between the spouses named above was not valid.

The marriage or convalidation ("blessing") took place on the following date and in the following place:

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): _____
(Arch) Diocese of _____
City, State, and Country: _____
Name/ Address of Church: _____

In making this petition, I contend that the marriage was invalid for the reason(s) contained in my application and as summarized below: *You **must** (1) include a very brief explanation of why you chose the ground(s), and (2) indicate the party on which the grounds apply: yourself, your former spouse, or both.*

1. Ground(s) and explanation:

2. Party or parties to whom it applies:

WITNESSES

I name the following witnesses who are knowledgeable about the above ground(s) and who are willing to appear and offer sworn testimony:

1. _____ 2. _____
3. _____ 4. _____

Petitioner Signature

Date

For Tribunal Use:

The undersigned orders that this petition be communicated to the Defender of the Bond and to the Respondent, who are granted 15 days to express their views on this petition.

Date Accepted _____

Possible Grounds:

Very Reverend R. Mathew Panackal, MOC, J.C.D.
Judicial Vicar

Mrs. Ann Vincent
Notary of the Court

Witnesses

Typed answers are preferred over handwritten answers.

It is **absolutely necessary** to provide the names and complete addresses of **several** witnesses (preferably four) who can support the grounds of your case. The best witnesses are friends, co-workers, family members, roommates, or others who knew both you and the Respondent before and during the marriage.

Please contact your witnesses personally and inform them that you will give their names and addresses to the Tribunal. If you do not contact them, they may be surprised and even angered when the Tribunal cites them. Their refusal to answer questions can seriously delay or affect the outcome of your case.

1

Title		First Name		Middle Name		Last Name	
Street Address				City		State	
ZIP		Country		Telephone Number		<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female
Relationship to you				Relationship to the Respondent			

How long has this person known you?

Did this person know both you and the Respondent at the time of the marriage? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Did this person agree to be a witness and to testify at the Tribunal Office? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What will this person be able to tell the Tribunal? Please be specific.

2

Title		First Name		Middle Name		Last Name	
Street Address				City		State	
ZIP		Country		Telephone Number		<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female
Relationship to you				Relationship to the Respondent			

How long has this person known you?

Did this person know both you and the Respondent at the time of the marriage? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Did this person agree to be a witness and to testify at the Tribunal Office? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What will this person be able to tell the Tribunal? Please be specific.

Typed answers are preferred over handwritten answers.

3

_____ <i>Title</i>		_____ <i>First Name</i>		_____ <i>Middle Name</i>		_____ <i>Last Name</i>	
_____ <i>Street Address</i>				_____ <i>City</i>		_____ <i>State</i>	
_____ <i>ZIP</i>		_____ <i>Country</i>		_____ <i>Telephone Number</i>		<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female
_____ <i>Relationship to you</i>				_____ <i>Relationship to the Respondent</i>			

How long has this person known you?

Did this person know both you and the Respondent at the time of the marriage? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Did this person agree to be a witness and to testify at the Tribunal Office? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What will this person be able to tell the Tribunal? Please be specific.

4

_____ <i>Title</i>		_____ <i>First Name</i>		_____ <i>Middle Name</i>		_____ <i>Last Name</i>	
_____ <i>Street Address</i>				_____ <i>City</i>		_____ <i>State</i>	
_____ <i>ZIP</i>		_____ <i>Country</i>		_____ <i>Telephone Number</i>		<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female
_____ <i>Relationship to you</i>				_____ <i>Relationship to the Respondent</i>			

How long has this person known you?

Did this person know both you and the Respondent at the time of the marriage? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Did this person agree to be a witness and to testify at the Tribunal Office? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What will this person be able to tell the Tribunal? Please be specific.

Typed answers are preferred over handwritten answers.

5

Title	First Name	Middle Name	Last Name
Street Address	City		State
ZIP	Country	Telephone Number	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
Relationship to you		Relationship to the Respondent	

How long has this person known you?

Did this person know both you and the Respondent at the time of the marriage? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Did this person agree to be a witness and to testify at the Tribunal Office? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What will this person be able to tell the Tribunal? Please be specific.

Professional or Expert Witnesses

*If you saw a professional **about issues related to your grounds** at any time before or during the marriage, please answer the following:*

Did you see a Licensed Counselor, Psychologist, Psychiatrist, or Clinical Social Worker?

☐ No ☐ Yes, the Respondent did, without me. ☐ Yes, we did together. ☐ Yes, I did without the Respondent.

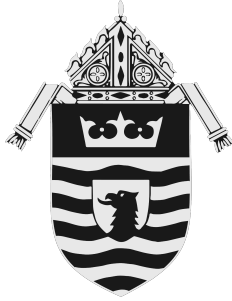
Did you see a Medical Doctor or other health professional (about issues related to this marriage)?

☐ No ☐ Yes, the Respondent did, without me. ☐ Yes, we did together. ☐ Yes, I did without the Respondent.

If 'yes' to any of the above, would you be willing to sign a Release from Confidentiality Form to allow that person to offer testimony that is relevant to your case (if the Tribunal considers it necessary and helpful to the case)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

PLEASE NOTE: *If the Respondent was seen with you or individually, it will be necessary for the Respondent to sign a Release and Authorization for a professional witness to offer testimony.*

*If psychiatric or psychological illness played a role in the problems that existed at the time of this marriage, it will be helpful to the case if you submit original documents or certified (notarized) copies of any medical or hospital records in your possession which show a diagnosis and treatment dates. If physical abuse was present in the marriage, it will be helpful to submit original documents or certified (notarized) copies of any records in your possession regarding this, such as medical, hospital, or police records. **Photocopies of records, which are not notarized, will not be accepted.** Only original documents or notarized copies of the originals will be accepted by the Tribunal.*



TRIBUNAL

DIOCESE OF LAKE CHARLES

P. O. Box 3223
Lake Charles, LA 70602
(337) 439-7400

POLICY STATEMENT

I, _____, the Petitioner, understand that:

- *A declaration of nullity cannot be issued unless I have provided evidence sufficient to overcome the presumption of validity of my marriage.*
- *My submitting the Petition does not guarantee that a declaration of nullity will be granted.*
- *The other party (Respondent) has the right to know why I allege our marriage is invalid; furthermore, he/she will be invited to participate in these proceedings and all his/her rights will be protected as well as mine, including the right to inspect the Acts of the case (declarations, testimonies, etc.).*
- *I cannot set (even tentatively) a date for marriage or validation in the Catholic Church until the nullity of the previous marriage(s) has/have been established with certainty according to the laws of the Church.*
- *I understand that no assurance of the outcome or the time it will take to complete the process can be given.*
- *I understand that if there is a judgment granting the declaration of nullity, it may contain a clause delaying or restricting permission to remarry in the Church.*

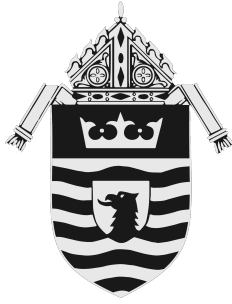
I hereby certify that:

- *I have contacted the witnesses whose names and addresses I have supplied, and they agree to participate.*
- *I understand that I am not to discuss the facts of my case with them.*
- *I have kept a photocopy of the materials I am submitting.*

And I swear to the truthfulness of the evidence I am submitting.

Signature of Petitioner

Date



DIOCESE OF LAKE CHARLES

P. O. Box 3223
Lake Charles, LA 70602
(337) 439-7400

TRIBUNAL

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I _____, the Petitioner in this case, understand that this trial is being conducted in accordance with the Canon Law of the Roman Catholic Church, and that these proceedings have no effect in civil law, and that I am being given the opportunity to review the documents, testimony, and procedural acts of the case not known to me for the sole purpose of assisting me in the effective exercise of my rights before the Tribunal. I hereby undertake and promise as follows:

1. *I voluntarily waive now and in the future any right under law to the subpoena or judicial discovery of the documents and evidence of this case apart from a case in this ecclesiastical tribunal. This waiver is given without reservation or condition. I understand that Louisiana Revised Statute 13:3734.2 states that all communication with this Tribunal is privileged and cannot be obtained by any legal means for use in civil or criminal court, an administrative or legislative agency, or by way of deposition or other discovery procedure.*
2. *I agree to keep confidential and secret any information that I shall learn in the course of these proceedings. To that end, I affirm that I shall make no copies or recordings of information or conversations regarding my case. I promise not to use information that I may learn through this case in any other forum or for any other purpose.*
3. *I promise not to discuss, publish, or disseminate through any means the information that I may learn here. I promise not to make use of this information in any way other than to prepare and argue my case before the tribunals of the Catholic Church. In all other places and for all other purposes I agree to keep all information I shall learn from this case confidential.*
4. *I recognize that if I should violate or threaten to violate this agreement, I consent to the authority of the Tribunal of the Diocese of Lake Charles to impose any penal remedy, penance, and/or penalty for this offense, as permitted by the canon law of the Church, and to seek relief or remedy in any court of law or equity.*
5. *I assume in perpetuity any responsibility for damage inflicted to others by my intentional or negligent release of information learned through this case and agree to hold harmless from such damages the Diocese of Lake Charles as well as all persons who have offered testimony or documents in this case, and all officers and agents of the Tribunal of the Diocese of Lake Charles.*

I acknowledge that I have read the above provisions of this agreement and policy, and I fully understand them, and I further freely agree to abide by them now and in the future. I do so solemnly attest before God and my conscience.

SO HELP ME GOD.

*Signature

Date

**Petitioner to sign when submitting application. *Respondent to sign when giving testimony or viewing the acts.*

Case Initiator* Verification

I, _____, the undersigned Initiator of this case, do hereby inform the Tribunal of Lake Charles that I have assisted the Petitioner in this case to the best of my ability; furthermore, I have reviewed the attached case and verify that the case is complete and ready for judicial review.

Furthermore, I have reviewed the grounds of nullity alleged by the Petitioner and

I agree with the alleged ground(s) of _____

*I disagree with the alleged ground(s) of _____
for the following reason(s):*

Church Parish

Signature of Initiator

City and State

Date



** The **Initiator** is the priest, deacon, or advocate who assists the Petitioner.*

Application Checklist

IMPORTANT: *The following are **required** in order to submit your case. If any of the following is missing, **your application will be returned.***

1. Completed Information and Petition Forms (pgs. 3 - 22)
2. Petition (pg. 19): *Entered at least one of the grounds from pgs. 17-18 in the middle box; Signed and dated with original signature*
3. Policy Statement (pg. 23) and Confidentiality Statement (pg. 24): *Signed and dated with original signature*
4. All documents relating to previous applications for declarations of nullity and/or *Ligamen* and *Defective Form* documents
5. Marriage Certificate (Church): *Original updated for the marriage in question*
6. Marriage License and/or Certificate (State): *Original with the number of previous marriages indicated*
7. Divorce and/or Civil Annulment Decree for the marriage in question
8. Baptismal Certificate of Petitioner and Respondent: *Original updated (issued within the past 6 months); A copy will **not** be accepted.*

Please make and retain a copy of all forms and documents.