

# ***A Guide to Marriage Convalidation***

Welcome to St. John's and thank you for being a part of our faith community. Our parish marriage coordinator will assist you in preparing for your convalidation. There are defined diocesan and parish policies for the convalidation of a civil marriage. It is not our intent to make it difficult for couples, but rather, the Church recognizes the seriousness of marriage and the responsibility of a caring church to help couples prepare adequately for a community of life and love together.

## **What is a Convalidation?**

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. 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, thus demonstrating that they desire a bond that “by its nature is perpetual and exclusive” and which “strengthens and, as it were, consecrates the spouses in a Christian marriage for the duties and dignity of their state” (*Code of Canon Law, Canon 1134*).

## **Preparation Process**

† Contact Deacon Ron to schedule an appointment. During this meeting you will:

- provide the required documents
- complete the Diocesan Pre-Nuptial Investigation forms
- schedule a date for the convalidation and discuss the fee

† If you have been civilly married for less than 5 years, you will be required to complete formal marriage preparation. For couples civilly married more than 5 years, the amount of formal preparation will be determined by the pastor/deacon.

## **Required Documents**

The following documents are to be presented at the first meeting:

- A certified copy of your marriage license
- A Baptism certificate for each baptized party; Please note that Catholic baptism certificates must be dated within six months of the date submitted.
- First Communion certificate(s) and Confirmation certificate(s)
- Death certificate, if either party is a widow or a widower
- A Diocesan Tribunal “Declaration of Nullity” or “Decree of Freedom to Marry (Due to Lack of Form)”, if either party has a prior marriage
- Two “Freedom to Marry” forms must be filled out for any non-Catholic party. These forms will be provided by the marriage coordinator at the first meeting.
- Names and addresses of the two official witnesses for the ceremony

## **Fees**

The Church Fee for a convalidation is **\$250.00**.

## **Location, Day, and Time**

A convalidation is customarily done with little fanfare. It will be scheduled in the Church on a Friday evening or Saturday afternoon. Scheduling is dependent upon availability of the church and the priest or deacon who is to witness the ceremony.

For more information contact: Deacon Ron and Mary Madsen, Marriage Coordinators

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