

DIVORCED AND FAITHFUL: ALL IS RESTORED IN CHRIST

The Church journeys with each person through moments of heartbreaking sadness such as divorce offering a message of hope, love and mercy that is found in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

ARTICLE

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CHURCH TEACHINGS: WHAT IS AN ANNULMENT?

According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), the annulment process is frequently misunderstood. To bring a better understanding as to who needs an annulment, the process, and its effects, the bishops launched Annulment FAQs, as part of its ForYourMarriage.org initiative. The following information is from the USCCB's website and Father Fernando Gil, Judicial Vicar for the Diocese of Orlando. To read the full USCCB text, visit www.foryourmarriage.org/catholic-marriage/church-teachings/annulments.

“Annulment” is an unfortunate word that is sometimes used to refer to a Catholic “declaration of nullity.” Actually, nothing is made null through the process. Rather, a Church tribunal (a Catholic Church court) declares that a marriage thought to be valid according to Church law actually fell short of at least one of the essential elements required for a binding union.

A valid Catholic marriage results from five elements: the spouses are free to marry; they freely exchange their consent; in consenting to marry, they have the intention to marry for life, to be faithful to one another and be open to children; they intend the good of each other; and their consent is given in the presence of two witnesses and before a properly authorized Church minister.

Several steps are involved in the process, including submission of testimony about the spouses and marriage and ultimately a decision on the validity of the marriage.

If a marriage is declared null, does it mean that the marriage never existed?

No. It means it was not valid according to Church law. A declaration of nullity does not deny that a relationship existed. It simply states that the relationship was missing something that the Church requires for the validity of the marriage.

If a marriage is declared null, are the children considered illegitimate?

No. A declaration of nullity has no effect on the legitimacy of children, since the child's mother and father were presumed to be married at the time that the child was born. Legitimacy depends on civil law.

I do not plan to re-marry. Why should I present a marriage case?

Some people find that simply writing out their testimony helps them to understand what went wrong and why. They gain insights into themselves. Others say that the process allowed them to tell their whole story for the first time to someone who was willing to listen. Many find that the process helped them to let go of their former relationship, heal their hurts, and move on with their lives. A person cannot know today if they might want to marry in the future when crucial witnesses may be deceased or their own memories may have dimmed. Participation in tribunal procedures offers the parties a unique opportunity to experience both emotional and spiritual healing as they hand their litigation over to God and ask him to heal them from their wounds of broken relationships, abuse, addictions, sickness or death.

If you are divorced and would like to learn more about the process of declaration of nullity in the Diocese of Orlando, please contact your pastor.

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MEDIA RESOURCES FROM THE BISHOP GRADY MEMORIAL LIBRARY

To reserve resources from the Bishop Grady Memorial Library, contact BGML@orlandodiocese.org, call 407-246-4895, or visit the website at: www.orlandodiocese.org/ministries-offices/bishop-grady-memorial-library

CAT	Catholic's Divorce Personal Guide
CD-079	DivorceCare Audio Program
DVD-0109	Raising Children of Divorce
DVD-0110	Shattered Dreams
DVD-0737	Choosing Wisely Before You Divorce (kit)
DVD-0781	DivorceCare Program 3.0 (Kit)
DVD-0816	The Catholic's Divorce Survival Guide
DVD-086	DivorceCare for Kids (Kit)

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SCRIPTURE AND CATECHISM

Scripture

The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female, 'and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh' "So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." (Matthew 19: 3-6)

"It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill of divorce.' But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. (Matthew 5: 31-32)

The Pharisees approached and asked, "Is it lawful for a husband to divorce his wife?" They were testing him. He said to them in reply, "What did Moses command you?" They replied, "Moses permitted him to write a bill of divorce and dismiss her." But Jesus told them, "Because of the hardness of your hearts he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother [and be joined to his wife], and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, no human being must separate." In the house the disciples again questioned him about this. He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." (Mark 10:2-12)

Catechism

Today there are numerous Catholics in many countries who have recourse to civil divorce and contract new civil unions. In fidelity to the words of Jesus Christ — "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery" - the Church maintains that a new union cannot be recognized as valid, if the first marriage was. If the divorced are remarried civilly, they find themselves in a situation that objectively contravenes God's law. Consequently, they cannot receive Eucharistic communion as long as this situation persists. For the same reason, they cannot exercise certain ecclesial responsibilities. Reconciliation through the sacrament of Penance can be granted only to those who have repented for having violated the sign of the covenant and of fidelity to Christ, and who are committed to living in complete continence. (1650)

Toward Christians who live in this situation, and who often keep the faith and desire to bring up their children in a Christian manner, priests and the whole community must manifest an attentive solicitude, so that they do not consider themselves separated from the Church, in whose life they can and must participate as baptized persons:

They should be encouraged to listen to the Word of God, to attend the Sacrifice of the Mass, to persevere in prayer, to contribute to works of charity and to community efforts for justice, to bring up their children in the Christian faith, to cultivate the spirit and practice of penance and thus implore, day by day, God's grace. (1651)

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SCRIPTURE AND CATECHISM

Catechism

The remarriage of persons divorced from a living, lawful spouse contravenes the plan and law of God as taught by Christ. They are not separated from the Church, but they cannot receive Eucharistic communion. They will lead Christian lives especially by educating their children in the faith. (1665)

It can happen that one of the spouses is the innocent victim of a divorce decreed by civil law; this spouse therefore has not contravened the moral law. There is a considerable difference between a spouse who has sincerely tried to be faithful to the sacrament of marriage and is unjustly abandoned, and one who through his own grave fault destroys a canonically valid marriage. (2386)

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SAINTS AND PRAYERS

Saint Helen, Feast Day: August 18

Because she found the True Cross in Jerusalem, for many centuries devotion to St. Helen has been linked to devotion to the Holy Cross. It would be hard to find a painting, statue or holy card of her that does not depict her embracing the cross.

But there is another facet of Helen's life. After 22 years of marriage, Helen's husband, Constantius, divorced her in order to make a politically advantageous marriage with a young woman who was a member of Rome's imperial family.

Clearly, St. Helen would be a natural choice as patron of divorced and divorcing people, so why has this devotion to her arisen only recently? For most of the 1,700 years since Helen's death, divorce was rare, even among non-Catholics. Today, when divorce has become commonplace, St. Helen is offered to unhappy spouses as a heavenly patron who can truly sympathize with their anguish.

(from www.americancatholic.org)



Saint Adelaide of Burgundy (patron saint of second marriages)

Feast day: December 16

Adelaide married Otto in Pavia, Italy in 951. He was crowned Emperor in Rome, Italy in 952, and Adelaide reigned with him for 20 years. Widowed in 973, she was ill-treated by her step-son, Emperor Otto II and his wife Theophano, but eventually reconciled with her royal in-laws.

When Otto II died in 983, he was succeeded by his infant son, Otto III. Theophano acted as regent, and since she still did not like Adelaide, used her power to exile her from the royal court. Theophano died in 991, and Adelaide returned once again to the court to act as regent for the child emperor. She used her position and power to help the poor, to evangelize, especially among the Slavs, and to build and restore monasteries and churches. When Otto III was old enough, Adelaide retired to the convent of Selta near Cologne, a house she had built. Though she never became a nun, she spent the rest of her days there in prayer.



Prayer in Times of Family Strife

God of compassion and grace,
In your steadfast love accompany (Name) and (Name).
As you ever work to restore and renew your people,
overcome bitterness with your joy,
hatred with your love, brokenness with your life;
and give us hope
through the death and Resurrection of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

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DOCUMENTS AND WEBSITES

USCCB

Marriage, Love and Life in the Divine Plan (also available in Spanish):

www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/love-and-life

For Your Marriage

Church Teaching on Divorce: www.foryourmarriage.org/catholic-marriage/church-teachings/divorce

Church Teaching on Annulments: www.foryourmarriage.org/catholic-marriage/church-teachings/annulments

Vatican Search for these titles at www.vatican.va

Pope Francis General Audience, Wednesday, August 5, 2015 - Wounded Families

"...the awareness has truly grown that it is necessary to have a fraternal and attentive welcome, in love and in truth, of the baptized who have established a new relationship of cohabitation after the failure of the marital sacrament; in fact, these persons are by no means excommunicated — they are not excommunicated! — and they should absolutely not be treated as such: they are still a part of the Church."

Familiaris Consortio, Saint John Paul II, section *Pastoral Action in Certain Irregular Situations*

"I earnestly call upon pastors and the whole community of the faithful to help the divorced, and with solicitous care to make sure that they do not consider themselves as separated from the Church, for as baptized persons they can, and indeed must, share in her life. They should be encouraged to listen to the word of God, to attend the Sacrifice of the Mass, to persevere in prayer, to contribute to works of charity and to community efforts in favor of justice, to bring up their children in the Christian faith, to cultivate the spirit and practice of penance and thus implore, day by day, God's grace. Let the Church pray for them, encourage them and show herself a merciful mother, and thus sustain them in faith and hope."

Speech at the Seventh World Meeting of Families, Pope Benedict XVI, The Araujo Family

"...it is very important that they truly realize they are participating in the Eucharist if they enter into a real communion with the Body of Christ. Even without "corporal" reception of the sacrament, they can be spiritually united to Christ in his Body. Bringing them to understand this is important: so that they find a way to live the life of faith based upon the Word of God and the communion of the Church, and that they come to see their suffering as a gift to the Church, because it helps others by defending the stability of love and marriage."

Diocesan Resources

Office of Tribunal: www.orlandodiocese.org/ministries-offices/annulments

Separated and divorced support groups

- Holy Redeemer Parish, 1603 N. Thacker, Kissimmee. Contact: Sylvester, 407-406-0707.
- St. Margaret Mary Parish, 526 Park Ave. N., Winter Park. Contact: Lori Reinneck, lori@stmargaretmary.org, 407-645-0284.

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DIVORCED AND FAITHFUL: ALL IS RESTORED IN CHRIST: SCRIPT

"I know well what they are suffering." (Exodus 3:7)

When you are suffering from the loss of a divorce, God knows you are hurting.

In a similar way, the Church journeys with each person through moments of heartbreaking sadness such as divorce offering a message of hope, love and mercy that is found in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

This is the Catholic Church's mission - bringing forth God's salvific plan. The Church is called to *"proclaim and to spread among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God and to be, on earth, the initial budding forth of that kingdom."* (Lumen Gentium)

Through the Sacraments, we grow closer to our Lord Jesus Christ, grow in holiness and build the Kingdom of God on earth. Marriage is one of the Church's seven Sacraments.

"So they are not longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." (Matthew 19:6)

Catholics believe that marriage comes as a gift from the hand of God. The Catholic vision of marriage is rooted in Sacred Scripture and is expressed in the teachings and practices of the Church.

Even when a marriage ends in divorce, the Church encourages the individuals affected to participate in their faith.

"We [the US Bishops] understand the pain of those for whom divorce seemed the only recourse. We urge them to make frequent use of the sacraments, especially the Sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Reconciliation." (USCCB pastoral letter, Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan, 2009)

When a marriage ends, the Catholic Church offers the annulment process so that individuals can reflect on what went wrong. The Church also seeks to determine the couple's level of understanding at the time of their marriage. Did the couple understand the sacramental nature of their sacred bond at the time of their marriage or did other factors affect the validity of the Sacrament?

These are important areas that are explored as part of the annulment process. It's a process that is designed to bring a sense of closure as well as peace and forgiveness. The process is a time of profound healing. The Church opens her arms to receive those struggling with their divorce, to walk with them and encourage them to lead holy lives.

"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

People who have gone through an annulment have found peace and insight into themselves and their marriages. The Church invites you to find healing, forgiveness, and new joy.