



## Dear Petitioners:

Thank you for your recent inquiry to the Tribunal of the Diocese of Savannah.

The following is the information and necessary papers that you will need to begin the process to obtain a declaration of invalidity, in accordance with can. 1683ff of the Code of Canon Law promulgated on August 15th, 2015 by Pope Francis through the Motu Proprio ***Mitis Iudex Dominus Iesus***.

While the dynamic of the process may seem complicated, we want to assure you that the staff of the Tribunal is here to assist you every step of the way.

We hope this process will be a source of healing for you. Please do not get discouraged or disheartened if the process seems to take more time than you expected. We realize the importance of resolving your situation and will do our best to do so in a timely fashion.

Our Church teaches that the marriages of all people (even non-Catholics) are presumed valid unless proven otherwise. The annulment process is designed to determine whether the marriage in question is indeed valid or whether there was a defect of marital consent which rendered the marriage invalid.

### We ask the following of you:

1) Complete the enclosed questionnaire. Be honest and open in your responses. The task of the judge is to make an assessment of the facts of the case based on the law of the Church. The central question and focus is on the nature of the marital consent that was exchanged at the time of the wedding.

2) Please make sure that your witnesses are ready to cooperate. The Petitioners must follow up with the witnesses to ensure that they respond in a timely manner. The rules regulating this ***Special Process*** determine that the opportunity to offer testimony must be given during the 30 days following the official date of acceptance of the case (New Can. 1685.) If possible, the judge must collect the evidence in one hearing only within the same deadline (New Can. 1686.)

Unfortunately not every Petition processed according to this procedure will obtain a Declaration of Invalidity. The case may not be able to proceed to the judgment stage in this ***Special Process*** if your witnesses have not responded within the deadline or their testimony does not support your claims.

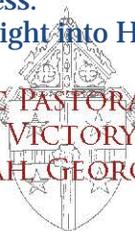
If the evidence gathered during the prescribed timeframe is insufficient to determine the invalidity of your marriage, it will still be our responsibility to investigate your former marital relationship and determine your legal status in the Church. We will do it according to the steps of the ***Ordinary Process*** for a Declaration of Invalidity.

Be encouraged. The Tribunal has a very competent, understanding, and professional staff to assist you in this important matter.

**Please be advised** that because of our deep concern for the safety of children and our firm commitment to keep them safe, we are obligated to report to the appropriate authority any and all instances of alleged abuse brought to our attention during the process.

May God bless you and bring you peace and insight into His love for you as you begin your case

CATHOLIC PASTORAL CENTER  
2170 E. VICTORY DRIVE  
SAVANNAH, GEORGIA 31404





## Petitioners Information Form

As you begin this **Petitioners Information Form** please know that according with to norms regulating this **Special Process** an affirmative decision cannot be rendered if the act of marrying was just *possibly* invalid or *probably* invalid. Rather, it can only be rendered if it is *morally certain* to have been invalid, supported by particularly clear arguments. The process, which includes the submission of this form and other documents, will help the Bishop and the Tribunal to make a well-informed decision regarding the marriage.

- The **first section** (pages 2-3) includes an **Agreement to the Tribunal Policies** and a **Financial Agreement** regarding the cost of the Process (No person is ever turned away from the Tribunal because of their inability to pay a requested fee.)
- The **second section** (page 4-5) is the **Petition** required to open the investigation for a decree of invalidity. It includes a Check Options Section which will help you in proposing the reason or basis for the Tribunal to examine the validity of your marriage.

The Petition includes also a section for the names and complete addresses of witnesses who can be contacted to answer questions about your courtship and marriage.

- The **third section** (page 6-7) asks basic information regarding you (Contact and biographical information, Present Religion, baptismal status), and about your courtship, marriage and divorce.
- The **fourth section** (pages 8-9) contains a series of questions that will help the Tribunal understand the circumstances related to your marriage and eventual divorce.
- The **final section** (pages 10-11) includes information related to your previous marriage/s and your current marital status. **The last page is a checklist of what is required for you to submit this Information Form and Petition.**

If you would like assistance in completing this information, you may meet with a Case Sponsor (a trained person who is available to assist those seeking a declaration of nullity of a former marriage) in your parish — call the parish office or speak with a priest or deacon at the parish. Once you have completed this form, you must meet with a Case Sponsor who will review it with you before it is submitted. Please do not send this form to the Tribunal before meeting with a Case Sponsor. Once the Tribunal receives this information, you will be notified of the next steps in the process. It is important that you keep us informed of any changes in address for you, your former spouse or your witnesses, so the process can run smoothly.

Please be sure to discuss any issues of concern with your Case Sponsor before you submit your case and with your Advocate during the process.



## AGREEMENT TO TRIBUNAL POLICIES and PRACTICES

The Policies and Practices of the Diocesan Tribunal of Savannah are:

- 1) I understand that, if the Tribunal accepts my case for consideration, it cannot and does not guarantee that an Affirmative decision will be given in the case.
- 2) I understand that the Tribunal cannot and will not ever promise or guarantee to conclude a case by a certain date. I agree to wait until I receive a Final Decision before setting a definite date for remarriage within the Catholic Church, for the Convalidation (blessing) of an existing civil marriage, or being baptized or received into the Church.
- 3) I understand that the Tribunal, in the investigation of the case, may employ the services of a psychological professional or other expert witness and I hereby authorize the Tribunal to disclose complete information concerning my case to such a professional for case review. Upon completion of the case, I also authorize the Tribunal to release information regarding the case to a psychological expert, counselor, priest, or deacon for follow-up counseling as well as for pre-marital preparation presently or in the future. It is understood that otherwise all contents of this investigation will be kept confidential, reserved exclusively to the parties to the case and to the staff of the Tribunal, according to the canon law of the Roman Catholic Church.
- 4) I voluntarily waive now and in the future any right under law (civil or ecclesiastical) to the subpoena or judicial discovery of the Testimonial Acts for this case. This waiver is given without reservation and condition. The purpose of this waiver is to provide for candor and openness in testimony and in recognition of the purely spiritual and religious nature of these proceedings.
- 5) I understand that the Tribunal's Presiding Judge will issue a decree binding all parties in this case to confidentiality. Accordingly, I agree to keep confidential and secret any information that I shall learn in the proceedings. Because all testimony given in this case is given only for the possible ecclesiastical annulment of my marriage, and because my interest is solely to present my case to the Tribunal, I promise not to use information that I might learn through the case or, during the proceedings in any other forum (civil or ecclesiastical) or for any other purpose.
- 6) I agree to pay this amount, Three Hundred (\$300.00) to the Diocesan Tribunal. I also understand that If I am not faithful to this commitment, without explanation, the Tribunal will take that as a sign that I have lost interest in pursuing the case, and the work on my case will cease until I provide an explanation or renew payments.

I promise to pay my case fee as follows:

\$300.00 in one payment

\$300.00 in two (2) installments (\$200.00 due with this Petition and \$100.00 due at Notification of the Decision)

\$300.00 in three (3) installments of \$100.00 each, payable at the beginning the first of each month, beginning of next month. (if you cannot pay the suggested fee of \$300 and are asking the Tribunal to assume the expenses for your case, please include an explanation or other documentation of your financial hardship.)

*By my signature I attest that I have read and agree to the foregoing Policies and Practices of the Diocesan Tribunal of the Diocese of Savannah*

SIGNATURE of PETITIONER/S:

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

**Note: Your signatures must be witnessed and notarized by a Public Notary.  
One is available at the Tribunal free of charge.**



## Petition for a Case to Examine the Validity of Marriage (according with can.1683ff of the Code of Canon Law)

**Female Spouse** - full name (Maiden name, if applicable)    **Male Spouse**- full name

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**City of Residence**

**City of Residence**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**The marriage (convalidation) took place on the following date and at the following place:**

Date (mm/dd/yyyy)

City and State, or City and Country

\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**In making this petition, we contend that the marriage was not valid for the following reason(s):**

- the defect of faith which can generate simulation of consent or error that determines the will;
- a brief conjugal cohabitation;
- an abortion procured to avoid procreation;
- an obstinate persistence in an extraconjugal relationship at the time of the wedding or immediately following it;
- the deceitful concealment of sterility, or grave contagious illness, or children from a previous relationship, or incarcerations;
- a cause of marriage completely extraneous to married life, or consisting of the unexpected pregnancy of the woman, physical violence inflicted to extort consent, the defect of the use of reason which is proved by medical documents,
- one or both spouses were not able to make such a serious decision at the time they married

**We hereby request that the Diocesan Bishop through the Tribunal of the Diocese of Savannah accept and adjudicate this petition according with can.1683ff of the Code of Canon Law (*The Briefer Matrimonial Process in front the Bishop*) to recognize that the marriage between the spouses named above was not valid and binding.**

In a few brief sentences, we briefly summarize as follows the facts and contentions which support the ground(s) proposed

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Initials of Female Petitioner \_\_\_\_\_

Initials of Male Petitioner \_\_\_\_\_



**We name the following as knowledgeable witnesses about the above ground(s), able and willing to provide testimony and evidence in this case.**

1. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_ How long known \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_ How long known \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_ How long known \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Among the documents supporting this petition are included the following medical records that can clearly render useless the requirement of an psychological *expert* appointed by the Diocesan Tribunal to review the testimony:

\_\_\_\_\_

***We attest before God and our consciences that the above information is true and complete to the best of our knowledge.***

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Female Petitioner

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Male Petitioner

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Case Sponsor (Signature and Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Parish





## BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF FEMALE PETITIONER

Your Present Name \_\_\_\_\_ Maiden Name \_\_\_\_\_

Present Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/ County/St/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Present Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_ Religion at the time of the Wedding \_\_\_\_\_

Present Religion \_\_\_\_\_

Present Parish \_\_\_\_\_

Parish Address City/St/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Church of Baptism \_\_\_\_\_ Church Address City/St/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF MALE PETITIONER

Your Present Name \_\_\_\_\_ Maiden Name \_\_\_\_\_

Present Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/ County/St/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Present Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_ Religion at the time of the Wedding \_\_\_\_\_

Present Religion \_\_\_\_\_

Present Parish \_\_\_\_\_

Parish Address City/St/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Church of Baptism \_\_\_\_\_ Church Address City/St/Zip \_\_\_\_\_



## Information about the Courtship

When did you meet? \_\_\_\_\_

How long did you know one another before marriage? \_\_\_\_\_

How long did you date each other before marriage? \_\_\_\_\_

How long were you engaged? \_\_\_\_\_

## Information about the Marriage

What was the date of the wedding ceremony (mm/dd/yyyy) ? \_\_\_\_\_

What was the name of the church or place of the wedding? \_\_\_\_\_

Address, City and Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Who conducted the ceremony, (i.e. Catholic clergyman, civil official, other)? \_\_\_\_\_

What were your ages at time of marriage? Female Petitioner \_\_\_\_\_ Male Petitioner \_\_\_\_\_

Was this the first marriage for: Female Petitioner \_\_\_\_\_ Male Petitioner \_\_\_\_\_

How long did you live together in this marriage? \_\_\_\_\_

How many children were born during this marriage? Please list date(s) of birth (mm/dd/yyyy):

\_\_\_\_\_

Were there other pregnancies during your marriage?

If Yes: how many? \_\_\_\_\_ How did they end? \_\_\_\_\_

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

Number of separations during the marriage \_\_\_\_\_ Approximate date of the first separation \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_

What brought about the **first** separation (briefly)? \_\_\_\_\_

Date of the civil divorce: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ Who applied for the divorce: \_\_\_\_\_

Where (place) was the Divorce granted? \_\_\_\_\_ Was it no-fault or for cause? \_\_\_\_\_

Is there any ongoing or pending litigation between the parties related to child or spousal support? \_\_\_\_\_

## Preliminary Questions

The following questions will assist the Judge in your case preparing the grounds for your petition for an annulment. Some questions may apply and some, even many, may not. Please be honest and avoid simple "one" word responses. More detailed questions based on your answers here will be asked to you as the process continues. **Please note:** because of our concern for the safety of children, we will report to the appropriate authority any and all alleged instances of abuse brought to our attention.

- 1) Did either of them use drugs or alcohol before the wedding ceremony? Were either of you intoxicated, "stoned," or "high" during the ceremony? (can.1095, 1) Yes  No
- 2) Were either you or your former spouse ever diagnosed with a serious learning disability, schizophrenia, any mental disability or any kind of mental illness that caused blackout or delusional episodes? Yes  No

**Please Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

- 3) Was a grave immaturity the reason for your brief marital life? (can.1095, 2) Yes  No
- 4) Did you see marriage as simply the next step in your relationship? Yes  No

**Please Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

- 5) Did either of you have any serious Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, pathological gambling or sexual disorder, serious questions about his/her sexual identity or homosexuality? (Canon 1095.3) Yes  No
- 6) Did either of you have any addictions at the time of the wedding? Yes  No
- 7) Did either of you suffer from a serious mental illness or nervous disorder at the time of your wedding? Yes  No

**Please Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

- 8) Did either of you firmly believe that marriage was merely a civil contract, having only civil effects, with no relationship to religion or the Church? (Canon 1099) Yes  No
- 9) Did either of you come from a background which taught that divorce and remarriage were possible under certain circumstances? (*e.g., adultery, difficult times, unhappiness, unfulfillment, etc.*) Yes  No

**Please Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_



10) Did either of you believe firmly that you had the right to determine when and if you would have children? (canon 1101.2a) Yes  No

11) If you had decided to postpone children, or not to have them, did you deliberately avoid pregnancy and childbirth? Yes  No

12) Was abortion ever discussed or threatened as a means of terminating a pregnancy should a pregnancy ever occur? Yes  No

**Please Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

13) Were either of you unaware that marriage includes fidelity? Yes  No

14) Were either of you unfaithful before marriage? Yes  No

15) Was infidelity a continuing problem? Yes  No

**Please Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

16) Did either of you intentionally misrepresent or conceal information necessary for the other person to make a well-informed marital decision? (Canon 1098) Yes  No

17) Was the deception intentionally done in order to get the other person's agreement to marry? Yes  No

**Please Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

18) Did either of you agree to marry or go through a wedding ceremony for some reason other than being in love and wanting to marry one another? (Canon 1101) Yes  No

19) Did either of you feel that you had no real choice whether to marry the other? Yes  No

20) Were either you or your former spouse deeply afraid that NOT marrying would bring about a serious harm or threat? (Canon 1103) Yes  No

**Please Explain:** \_\_\_\_\_

21) Is there any other information that would be useful for the Tribunal to have?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



**PLEASE LIST ANY OTHER MARRIAGES THAT THE FEMALE PETITIONER HAS EVER CONTRACTED**

*Listed will be those marriages that have contracted BEFORE or AFTER the present one in this matter.*

I. Name of the Spouse \_\_\_\_\_

Date of the marriage \_\_\_\_\_ Date of the Divorce \_\_\_\_\_

II. Name of the Spouse \_\_\_\_\_

Date of the marriage \_\_\_\_\_ Date of the Divorce \_\_\_\_\_

III. Name of the Spouse \_\_\_\_\_

Date of the marriage \_\_\_\_\_ Date of the Divorce \_\_\_\_\_

Were any of the marriages listed above annulled by the Catholic Church? Yes  No

When? \_\_\_\_\_ Where? \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE LIST ANY OTHER MARRIAGES THAT THE MALE PETITIONER HAS EVER CONTRACTED**

*Listed will be those marriages that have contracted BEFORE or AFTER the present one in this matter.*

I. Name of the Spouse \_\_\_\_\_

Date of the marriage \_\_\_\_\_ Date of the Divorce \_\_\_\_\_

II. Name of the Spouse \_\_\_\_\_

Date of the marriage \_\_\_\_\_ Date of the Divorce \_\_\_\_\_

III. Name of the Spouse \_\_\_\_\_

Date of the marriage \_\_\_\_\_ Date of the Divorce \_\_\_\_\_

Were any of the marriages listed above annulled by the Catholic Church? Yes  No

When? \_\_\_\_\_ Where? \_\_\_\_\_



## Check List for Submitting Your Petition

The following is a list of information and documents REQUIRED to submit your case. If you cannot obtain one of the following documents, please indicate on a separate sheet of paper what unsuccessful efforts you made or why the information is not available. If your Information Form or Petition is missing any of the following, it will delay acceptance of the case.

- a) **Completed Information Form (no blank spaces) in black ink.**
- b) **Complete and accurate mailing address of both parties .**
- c) **Marriage License or Marriage Certificate for the marriage in question.**
- d) **Divorce Decree for the marriage in question.**
- e) **Recent (within the past six months) Baptism Certificates of any Catholic spouse.**
- f) **Complete names, mailing addresses, phone numbers for the submitted witnesses.**
- g) **Completed *Petition for a Case to Examine the Validity of Marriage* (no blank spaces) signed by both parties on both pages.**
- h) **Please make and keep a photocopy of everything you submit to the Tribunal, in case there are problems with mailing.**

**Note:** It will help your case if you contact your witnesses personally to inform them that you have started this case. Please ask your witnesses personally to respond to the Tribunal. The longest delay in most cases comes from witnesses not responding quickly. It is your responsibility to assure that your witnesses respond quickly. The Tribunal will normally offer the opportunity to testify during the 30 days following the official date of acceptance of the case (New Can. 1685.) If possible, the judge will contact the witnesses and try to collect the evidence in only one hearing **within the same deadline** (New Can. 1686.)

During this Special Process the Tribunal will not normally re-contact witnesses who do not respond.