**QUESTIONS CATHOLICS ASK ABOUT DIVORCE**

**Can a divorced Catholic receive communion?**

Divorced Catholics lose none of their rights in the Church, except the right to enter a new marriage, until the Church declares them free to marry. **All Catholics, divorced Catholics included, are free to receive the sacraments, provided they are not in a state of serious sin**, (i.e. have not remarried "outside the Church," or are not cohabiting with another partner). If they are in another marital (or cohabiting) union, they are not permitted to receive the sacraments. People in such a situation are encouraged to speak with their pastor.

**Is there such a thing as divorce in the Church?**

No. However, Catholic teaching and law refer to the possible "dissolution" of a bond of marriage. In certain cases, a marriage recognized by the Catholic Church may be dissolved. Such a dissolution means that a valid marriage may have existed, but ended when the dissolution was granted. [Dissolution of marriage differs from nullity of marriage which will be discussed below.]

Only two types of marriages may be dissolved by the Church:

1. one that was never consummated or
2. one in which one or both parties were never baptized. In other words, a consummated marriage between two baptized persons can never be dissolved. However, should such a marriage fail, *it could be examined by the Marriage Tribunal*, as could any other marriage, to see if grounds are present for a possible Declaration of Nullity

In order for a dissolution of marriage to be granted (by the diocesan Bishop or by the Pope), certain conditions must be met, and clear proofs must be available. In the Archdiocese of Kingston, marriage dissolutions are dealt with through the Chancellor's Office, not through the Marriage Tribunal.

**Do I have to have a civil decree of divorce (Divorce Certificate) before I begin annulment proceedings?**

It is presumed that, when a person approaches the Tribunal, all avenues of reconciliation have been attempted and proven unsuccessful. While not absolutely necessary *prior to* initiating a case of nullity of marriage, a civil decree of divorce (Divorce Certificate) provides the Tribunal with the assurance that the common life of the couple has been terminated in an irretrievable fashion. A decree of divorce (Divorce Certificate) will be requested before a final decision is reached in a marriage nullity case. A Divorce Order will not be accepted.