

## Marriage, Divorce and Annulments

We can't talk about annulments & divorce without first talking about the Catholic idea of Marriage...

- Marriage is a covenant, which is an unbreakable, permanent bond between a man and woman with God as the 'glue' that holds couples together.
- The love a couple shows one another is a way to experience God's love. (See 1 John 4:7, 16)
- The marriage bond can only be broken through the death of one party.
- Mark 10:1-12: Jesus' teaching about marriage & divorce... 'therefore what God has joined together, no human being must separate.'
- Genesis 2:24: from the moment of creation, God intended marriage to be a forever molding of 2 becoming 1.
- Matthew 5:31-32: Jesus' matter of fact words about the permanence of marriage, despite receiving civil divorce.

But, approximately 50% of marriages end in divorce...the ideal Jesus talked about is that marriage is a permanent bond, but in real life this doesn't always seem the case! Now what???

- The church presumes that ALL marriages are valid and permanent unless proven otherwise (even if you are not Catholic).
- But, you've reached the end of your marriage and have irreconcilable differences, so you get a divorce. Note that a divorce deals with the END of the marriage.
- Even though the legal *contract* has been broken through a bill of divorce, the Church still considers you married, because *covenants* cannot be broken unless one in the party dies.
- Through the process of seeking an annulment, one looks for evidence that the *covenantal* bond Jesus was talking about never existed in the first place. Therefore, an annulment looks at the BEGINNING of the marriage (the day of the wedding, and events leading up to it). Through the process of an annulment, an examination occurs of what might have been going on to prevent the union from being that permanent union God intended. Evidence includes:
  - not being able to freely enter into the union (examples—pregnancy and feeling we “HAVE” to get married now; fiancée giving an ultimatum ‘you will marry me or else...’),
  - inability to understand the permanent nature of marriage (examples—being under the influence of drugs or alcohol; young age/immaturity--rushing marriage without considering the nature of a lifelong commitment; serious mental illness),
  - getting married with your fingers crossed behind your back (examples--never intending on taking the vows seriously, signing a ‘pre-nup’)...

Questions:

- But what about my children? If my marriage is ‘nullified’ aren't they now ‘illegitimate?’
  - **NO!!!** The annulment states that the marriage did not rise to the level of the permanent ‘death do us part’ type of marriage Jesus was talking about, but the civil contract/union was still present at the time the kids were born.
- If I'm a divorced Catholic, am I kicked out of the church?
  - **NO!!!** “When a Catholic's marriage breaks down, some get a civil divorce in order to protect their property, inheritance or security. Catholics believe a marriage between two Christians can never be dissolved. So, although for legal

reasons a Catholic may get a civil divorce, the Church still considers them to be married and they cannot remarry in the Church [unless an annulment is granted]. Such people may however continue to receive Holy Communion and still remain full members of the Church.” (*How to Survive Being Married to a Catholic*, Henesy & Gallagher)

- I don't even know if I want to become Catholic—do I need to care about this info now?
  - **YES!!!** (well, maybe...depends on your situation, but...). *Why?*
    - Because the Church automatically assumes your marriage is the permanent marriage bond Jesus intended, regardless of your faith (Catholic or not).
    - Unless the case is a 'defect of form' (ie, a Catholic not marrying in the Catholic Church), formal annulment cases can take a year/+ to complete.
    - If you are already re-married and do not have an annulment of your previous marriage(s), you cannot receive the Sacraments in the Catholic Church until the annulment paperwork is completed and returned by the Tribunal. Once that paperwork is completed, your current marriage (the one you WANT to be permanent since you are together!) is convalidated (vows recited before a priest or deacon) and you are good to go!
  - So even if you're not sure about becoming Catholic or the idea of remarrying seems very remote at this time, start the process now. It's better to start and later decide not to continue through with it, than to delay starting and have your reception of the sacraments delayed or your possible future wedding delayed.
- How do I start the process?
  - If you aren't sure if you need an annulment or not, contact Mary Peacock ([mpeacock@stgerard.org](mailto:mpeacock@stgerard.org)) to schedule a one-on-one meeting. I can gather some background information and help point you in the right direction if further steps are needed.
  - Or you can directly contact one of our staff who can assist you in the annulment process: Deacon Jim ([jcorder@stgerard.org](mailto:jcorder@stgerard.org)), Fr. Bob ([rbacik@stgerard.org](mailto:rbacik@stgerard.org)), Fr. Mark ([mmartin@stgerard.org](mailto:mmartin@stgerard.org)), or Mrs. Julie Pirochta ([jpirochta@stgerardlansing.org](mailto:jpirochta@stgerardlansing.org))
- Wait, is this annulment stuff just a “Mary Peacock” rule or St. Gerard Parish rule?
  - **NO!!!** This is a universal, world-wide Catholic Church thing. You won't find any loopholes even if you look at other Catholic Parishes. ☹
- For more information: [click here](#).



*For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning: we should love one another...[but] let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth. (1 John 11, 18)*