

Metropolitan Tribunal

PROCEDURE FOR INVESTIGATING A CHURCH DECLARATION OF NULLITY

1) PRELIMINARY STEPS

Talk with your parish priest about your marriage situation to see whether you need an annulment or contact the Tribunal directly. **Before a case is initiated at the Tribunal, you must have already obtained a civil divorce.** If you are already divorced and wish to begin annulment proceedings, call the Tribunal at (215) 587-3750. You will be sent a questionnaire to fill out. Complete this questionnaire, which will ask for the basic facts and a brief explanation of the events of your marriage, and return it to the Tribunal. You will be sent a letter giving the date, place, and time of your initial hearing.

During this interview, you will be asked about your family background, the courtship, the marriage itself and its termination.

2) THE TRIBUNAL PROCESS

The other party, your ex-husband or ex-wife, is sent a letter by the Tribunal asking his/her participation and testimony. If he/she refuses, the case continues on its own merit without his/her cooperation.

Four witness questionnaires are given to you for family, friends, or anyone else who can verify your basic testimony or add additional information about your marriage. These forms are notarized by a priest or civil notary and returned by mail to the Tribunal by the individual witnesses. The length of the whole procedure is about nine to twelve months and the present cost is \$750.00. In cases of true need, verified by your parish priest, requests for reductions in these court costs can be made to the Tribunal.

In some cases, as part of the final decision in the case, the person receiving the annulment and the person he/she would like to marry in the Catholic Church are asked to meet with a counselor to evaluate their readiness for remarriage in the Catholic Church.

3) THE ROLE OF THE TRIBUNAL

The Tribunal process does not put you in the role of putting blame on the other party. The Decree of Nullity has no effect on the legitimacy of children or other matters such as custody or property settlements which are decided by civil law. An Affirmative Decision allows the parties to marry in the Catholic Church.