Office of the Tribunal
Diocese of Scranton
300 Wyoming Avenue
Scranton, PA 18503
570-207-2246

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMITTING A FORMAL ANNULMENT PETITION

I. INSTRUCTIONS

To initiate a petition for a declaration of marriage nullity, you are encouraged to first consult with a parish priest or deacon who will assist you in the preparation of your case. It would be most helpful for you to discuss with him the circumstances which led to the decision to marry.

The preliminary paperwork for such a declaration includes filling out a fact sheet and answering a questionnaire (application form), composing a petition and a narrative essay, as well as providing some supporting documents. The meeting with the priest or deacon should be done before the application and *libellus* are completed. He will conduct a final review of the entire paperwork and then submit it to the Tribunal Office.

The most recent version of the Tribunal forms can be downloaded from the Diocesan website.

You may fill out the forms by hand or electronically. Use of older versions and reformatted forms will not be accepted.

The forms can be completed using the program Adobe Reader which can be downloaded for free at http://get.adobe.com/reader.

If you choose to handwrite the forms, print and write your responses legibly in black ink only.

Either way you choose, please be sure to review all information carefully, sign and date your documents manually. Electronic signatures will not be accepted.

As a gentle reminder, the Tribunal cannot guarantee how long the process will take or what the outcome will be. Therefore, do not set a date for another marriage until a declaration of nullity has been issued.

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II. PETITION (*LIBELLUS*)

In composing your petition (*libellus*), please use the provided template (do not use a separate sheet of paper) and follow the outline *exactly* as depicted.

In the space provided on the form, begin your petition with this paragraph:

I, (your full name), being a baptized Catholic (or insert baptismal status and religious affiliation) living in (city and state), petition that the Scranton Tribunal investigate the canonical validity of my marriage with (full present name of former spouse), a baptized Catholic (or insert baptismal status and religious affiliation) who now lives in (city and state). This marriage was contracted on (date) in (city and state), at (name of church or hall). At the time of the wedding, I was (#) years old and my spouse was (#) years old. [If this wedding was later convalidated or "blessed" in the Catholic Church, add the following: This marriage was convalidated at (Church name), (city and state), on (date).]

In the petition, include the following information. (Items A-F should be in paragraph form.)

A. Length of dating period, and cohabitation period, if applicable

B. Length of formal engagement before the wedding

C. Number of children born during the marriage and their dates of birth

D. Dates of final separation and final decree of divorce

E. Whether or not either party has remarried

F. In simple terms, the reasons why this marriage should be declared null. Also describe in what ways this marriage differs from your hopes and expectations of each other that you had at the time the marriage took place. **Since a copy of the petition must be sent to your former spouse, please express the reasons truthfully but diplomatically. To deliberately provoke your former spouse by using excessive or prejudicial comments can result in a prolongation of the process.**

G. List the names of three (3) knowledgeable and cooperative witnesses who are willing to testify and indicate your relationship with each person.

H. Print, sign and date your petition manually. Electronic signature will not be accepted. Do not write below the signature line. The Decree of Acceptance is to be completed by the Tribunal only.

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III. PRELIMINARY APPLICATION

In filling out the Fact Sheet and Preliminary Application, it is asked that the entire form be completed, and ALL the questions be answered completely. The more complete the application, the better understanding the Tribunal has of your former marriage, and the more expeditious the case can be resolved. One or two-word replies are not helpful, and there will have to be significant clarification of these replies before the petition can be accepted.

So as to not jeopardize the integrity of the process and the outcome of our investigation, your former spouse must be contacted, or proof must be given of a reasonable attempt to make contact. Please be sure to provide your former spouse's full name and complete current address on the application form. If you do not know it, use different internet search engines.

The application must be signed and dated manually by you and your priest or deacon.

V. SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS FOR CONVALIDATION

If the marriage was convalidated ("blessed") in the Catholic Church after a wedding ceremony by a civil official or non-Catholic minister, you must complete and submit the supplemental questions with your application form.

VI. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Use the checklist on the last page of the application to ensure that you are submitting all the necessary materials. Please retain copies of all documents for your records before submitting them to the Tribunal.