

Why I Am Catholic

Annulments

I am often asked questions about Annulments. An annulment, or "a Declaration of Invalidity" is not a "Catholic Divorce." "The Church does not have the power to divorce any persons who have been united by God. A Declaration of Invalidity states that the sacramental bond of marriage was never present from the very beginning of the marriage. If this is decided by the Church, the persons are free to marry again. The Tribunal is the Church court which decides if this sacramental bond was present in a marriage or not." (*Metropolitan Tribunal webpage*)

The Church does not address civil issues of child support or custody, nor are we dealing with issues of legitimacy. We are looking at whether the elements necessary for a sacrament—the spiritual and covenant elements—were present in that marriage. "For the marriage bond between husband and wife to be established by God, a number of intentions must be made by the couple at the time of their marriage. The couple must know what marriage is and they must intend the marriage to be lifelong and open to children. They must intend fidelity and their mutual good. They must also have the physical and psychological ability as well as the personal maturity to follow through on what they have intended." (*Metropolitan Tribunal webpage*)

Any time someone wishes to be married in the Catholic Church—either two Catholics or a non-Catholic marrying a Catholic—we have the right and obligation to look at any previous marriages. We take marriage seriously and have been entrusted with a solemn duty by Jesus Christ. "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven." (Mt 16:19)