

## **THE TOP TEN LIST OF MYTHS ABOUT ANNULMENTS**

- 1. Once people divorce, they are no longer part of the church. Divorced people are excommunicated and no longer able to receive the Eucharist or other sacraments.***

Divorce itself does not change a person's ability to receive sacraments and participate fully in the Church. Remarriage without an annulment is when a person is not within the framework of the Church's teachings. A person who has remarried without an annulment is not to participate in the sacraments.

- 2. If your marriage is annulled by the church, it means you never had a marriage and your children are illegitimate.***

A marriage is also a civil, legal reality and your children were born of that legal union and are legitimate. Nothing changes either of those facts. Also, two people living together change each others lives and bring new life into the world. All these realities are permanent. An annulment states that one or both parties could not, would not or were not able to do marriage as the Church defines it. There are some situations the Church will not call marriage – abuse, being controlled by addictions, among others. These behaviors do not reflect the total commitment of the love that God has for us and marriage is a symbol of God's relationship with us. No marriage is perfect but the commitment, ability and knowledge of how to truly love each other and grow in the union is central.

- 3. Annulments are expensive, and the more you pay, the quicker your annulment will go through, which is why the rich and famous get preferential treatment. Tribunals are just a way for the church to make money.***

There is no fee for the process. Thanks to the generosity of the people in the Archdiocese in the Catholic Services Appeal and to the request of Pope Francis.

- 4. If you are married for a long time and have children, there is no way you can get an annulment.***

Annulments all follow the same criteria and focus on the time of consent. Just be assured you do not know the whole story and that people stay married for many different reasons. It is required that three judges review a case in a long marriage.

- 5. It helps to know somebody in the Tribunal.***

No one in the tribunal, including the Judicial Vicar, can work on a case involving someone they know.

- 6. Annulments can take years to be decided.***

The Holy Father has removed from the process the second review in another diocese. That shortens the process by months. The biggest factor in helping a case move is the quick, detailed and truthful testimony of witnesses.

**7. *I can shop around dioceses to get an annulment***

Legally, there is a defined process for where to apply for an annulment which was also recently adapted by Pope Francis. The first diocese that has the right to hear a case is where the marriage took place or where one or both of the participants now reside.

**8. *The former spouse has to cooperate and has to be contacted, even if he/she has been abusive and is dangerous.***

The former spouse has to be notified of the process. If he/she does not cooperate, that does not stop the case. In cases of proven abuse or other dangerous situations, there are provisions where the respondent's rights can be protected. It is the judgment of the Judicial Vicar in such cases how to proceed.

**9. *Every priest or parish church minister knows exactly what to do about my marriage situation in terms of an annulment.***

These people are professionals with many, many responsibilities within the parish. They do not necessarily have the time to follow the canonical issues on marriage. The Tribunal exists to process cases and to be a resource for priests and parish ministers. Always check with the Tribunal if you have questions about a marriage case.

**10. *If the person I want to marry is not Catholic or if he/she is not Catholic and was married by a justice of the peace, no annulment is necessary.***

If someone is not Catholic and their marriage is recognized as valid by their church, then we recognize it as valid. We cannot and do not make rules for other churches. If a person wishes to marry a Catholic or become Catholic, then they come into our domain. According to our teaching their first marriage was valid and they need to pursue an annulment.