

Convalidations: Making Your Marriage a Sacramental Marriage

- Convalidation: literally means with validity
- Convalidation is possible when two people who are free to marry (having no prior sacramental marriages), want their civil marriage to become a sacrament
- If you are a Catholic and only civilly married, you may not receive communion or the sacraments (unless near death) until your marriage is convalidated.
- Usually Convalidations require an investigation into any prior marriages—even civil ones and non-Catholic ones. These investigations can yield a decree of invalidity.
- All Catholic Marriages require a pre-nuptial investigation to determine freedom to marry and adequate understanding of what the couple is about to

tained from the State or County Government—they are public record. If all things are in order and the decree is granted, the Catholic Party follows the process for a simple Convalidation (as above).

Case 6: Petrine Privilege

The Catholic Church looks at all Christian Marriages as valid when celebrated between two baptized persons. However, in the case where an unbaptized person divorces a Christian and subsequently wants to become a Catholic, the Church offers a privilege to the convert to marry a Catholic person, upon their celebration of Christian Initiation in the Catholic Church. This is called a Petrine Privilege and requires that the prior marriage be dissolved by the Pope. Proof of the catechumen's never having been baptized before is provided by the Witness Forms. Proof of their former spouse's baptism must be provided in documentary form (usually by the Witness form). The Catholic, whom they desire to marry must also be free to marry, and there should be no possibility of scandal from this marriage.

In conclusion:

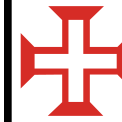
As you can see, there are many and complicated issues with convalidations. But there are ways to resolve these issues for a person who wants to return to the Sacramental life of the Church. The Church earnestly wants to bring you back, but also wants to defend the integrity of Marriage, and to guarantee the rights of both the former spouses and those whom one may want to marry.

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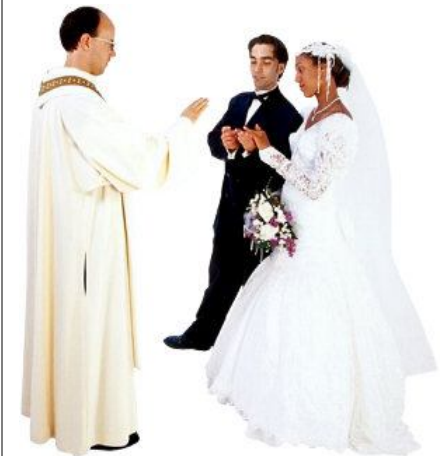
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Serving the People
of God

How Can I get my marriage blessed by the Church?



Saint Peter's Catholic Church

Civil Marriages Can Become Church Marriages: Here's How

It happens all the time. Young Catholics want to get married, but want it now. So they don't wait to go through the process. Or, the person a Catholic marries is divorced or non-Catholic and so they don't have a Catholic Church marriage. But later, the Catholic wants to return to the Church they were raised in, and it has become, well—er, complicated. And again, at the time that they wanted to get married, their Catholicism wasn't that important—or worse—they have left the Catholic Church altogether.

First, we have to say that not all of these situations can be remedied easily, but many can be worked out. The Church WANTS YOU to be able to come back to the sacraments, and to fulfill your obligations as a Catholic. So much so, that the Church has developed processes to help with that. It is called Convalidation. Other situations may require some process with obtaining an annulment.—but don't lose heart! Many of these are rather simple.

Case 1: Simple Convalidation

Two Catholics, But There Was No Church Wedding

In this case, the couple simply needs to see the priest and arrange to have the marriage convalidated. What is needed is a copy of the marriage license, new baptismal certificates with annotations for both husband and wife, and the Diocese of Pueblo Witness Form. These are filled out by

- People who have known the engaged party from before adult hood, who were present at their baptism and know they

were't married ever before. This is called the Banns.

The form is signed the presence of a Catholic Priest or Deacon. There may be a short series of visits with the priest to find out if you understand Catholic Marriage. But in the end, all they need is two witnesses, the couple and the priest. These are usually done in the pastor's office to maintain discretion and the couple's privacy.

Case 2: Mixed Marriage

One Catholic and a Protestant are already civilly married, and neither was married previously. This is done in the same way as the first case with one addition: Because most Protestants do not keep or have baptismal certificates, a letter from their church of baptism, or if no baptismal record or photos exist, 2 Diocese of Pueblo Witness Forms must be provided for the Protestant. Again, the protestant's witnesses should be people who were present at their baptism, and must know that the protestant party has never been married. These forms take the place of a baptismal certificate for the Protestant party.

Case 3: Pauline Privilege

One Catholic—never married wants to convalidate their marriage to an unbaptized person. And the unbaptized person was married before to another unbaptized person. Good addresses for all former spouses are needed for all cases where there is a prior marriage. This case requires what is called a Privilege Of The Faith Case (or Pauline Privilege). The unbaptized person must have the Diocese of Pueblo Witness Form filled out by two witnesses, as above. Because a sacramental marriage must include at least one baptized person, there is no way that the prior marriage could be sacramental. It just needs to be adjudicated as such by the Diocese. The Catholic presents a new original Baptismal Certificate with annotations and two Witness Forms, as above. A Marriage License is then also produced, attesting that they are civilly married. The Privilege form is filled out with the priest and a \$25 filing fee is sent in with the documents. If there are no complications, then this process can be completed in 6 months and the convalidation can follow according to the simple Convalidation (above).

Case 4: Lack of Canonical Form

When a divorced Catholic who was never married in the Church is civilly married to another person who was never married, the Catholic party applies for a decree of invalidity for the first marriage in a process that is called a "Lack of Canonical Form" case. For the prior marriage, the Catholic party must produce a good address for the former spouse, a set of new original baptismal certificates with notes, a marriage certificate from the state and a divorce decree for the marriage to the former spouse, also from the state. Then to convalidate the current marriage, Witness forms, Baptismal Certificates with notes for both (unless the second spouse is non-catholic (see **mixed marriage**, above) must be provided. Once the decree is issued, then you are free to convalidate your marriage.

Case 5: Prior Bond

If a Catholic was married civilly before, but not in the church because the first spouse was already divorced, the Catholic can apply for a decree of invalidity for the prior marriage as a "Ligamen" or "prior bond case". In this case, the Catholic must have a good address for the first spouse, proof of the other spouse's prior marriage(s) and divorce(s). These can be ob-



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