



Diocese of Saint Petersburg Office of the Tribunal Formal Cases

Process for Formal Case

How to Petition: To begin the process, contact a priest or deacon (preferably one in your parish). He will meet with you and give you the necessary forms and information to petition the Church for a Declaration of Nullity.

After you have completed the paperwork, have signed the appropriate forms, and written a detailed history of your former union, you should return them to the priest/deacon who will forward them to the Tribunal. Be sure you include a recent copy of your Baptismal certificate showing all notations (if Catholic), your marriage certificate, and final decree of divorce. Many find it helpful to tell their children what they are doing so as to avoid potential misunderstandings. Know that all materials gathered are held in the strictest confidence in accord with Church Law.

Your Former Spouse: The Church requires that your former spouse be notified of your petition to the Tribunal. Therefore, be sure to provide a current address for him/her. It is often worthwhile to let your former spouse know that they will be contacted by the Tribunal. The cooperation of your former spouse is very helpful so that the Tribunal may reach a just and fair decision. However, should your former spouse choose not to participate, the petition will continue to be processed.

Witnesses: The Church requires witnesses in order to provide a deeper understanding of you, your former spouse and the union. Please name people who knew you, or preferably, both of you prior to and during the union and who have indicated they would be willing to answer a questionnaire from the Tribunal. (Parents, brothers, sisters, mutual friends, members of the wedding party, usually make excellent witnesses.) Do not name children of the union. Be sure to let the witnesses know they will be contacted by the Tribunal.

Interview: After all the testimony has been gathered, an appointment may be made for you to meet with a staff member of the Tribunal. After reviewing all of the material the judge will render a decision.

What next? If the judge finds the union not binding, the decision will be sent to the Court of Second Instance in Miami. There the decision will either be confirmed, denied, or will be given a new hearing. You will be notified when a final decision has been reached.

How long? Since no two petitions presented to the Tribunal are the same, it is impossible to predict the length of time this process will take. The average length of time is eight months to one year, if we have complete cooperation from all involved.

**NO DATE FOR A MARRIAGE IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH CAN BE SET UNTIL A
DECLARATION OF NULLITY IS RECEIVED.**



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Fee: Effective February 1, 2015, the fees for all Tribunal services were eliminated by direction of Bishop Robert N. Lynch. This does not apply to cases started prior to this date. However, any remaining fees due on cases in process will be disregarded.

Flow for a Formal Case

Application ⇒ Investigation ⇒ Judgment ⇒ Appeal