



TRIBUNAL AND CANONICAL SERVICES

ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
ORANGE IN CALIFORNIA

Friday, August 26, 2022

Dear Pastors and RCIA Directors,

The peace of Christ be with you. As is our custom this time of year, we are writing to advise you of our **deadline for receiving applications for marriage nullity cases (including Formal, Favors of the Faith and Pauline Privilege cases) this year which will be the 4th of November 2022. This will allow us time to complete most cases by the *Rite of Election* which is expected to occur February 24 – February 28.**

1. **Please urgently inform all those working in RCIA/OCIA to interview all the candidates to ascertain whether or not they have a previous marriage, whether it was in a church or a civil marriage.**
2. Further, if the Candidate is engaged or in a civil union, it is also important to establish whether the Candidate's spouse/fiancé is free to marry in the Church. In other words, did he/she have a prior marriage? If the Candidate is in a civil union with someone who has a prior marriage, **this marriage must also be resolved** before the candidate can be baptized. If he/she is not yet married civilly, the future marriage cannot take place until his/her fiancé's prior marriage is resolved.
3. As you know, there is no guarantee of an affirmative decision, and no wedding date should be set before receiving the final decree.

Attached are some useful tips that will help you as you assist the Candidates and/or their spouses resolve their prior marriages.

With gratitude for your consideration in this important pastoral matter, I offer you my prayers and ask that you contact the tribunal for any additional concerns or questions,

With kind regards in Christ,

Rev. John Caronan, O.Praem., JCL
Director of the Tribunal



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TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL WORK WITH THE TRIBUNAL AND MARRIAGE CASES:

1. We are here to help! If you ever have any questions, please call. It is easier for you, the Petitioner and the tribunal staff to get it right the first time. If you are not sure which type of case is needed, or how to present the case just call one of our staff at 714-282-3080.
2. Please make sure you have thoroughly questioned the Candidate about former marriages. Frequently people will say they have no previous marriages because they were never married in the church, or they had a “fake” marriage for immigration purposes. Re-phrase the questions several ways until you are certain they have never said “I do.” *Don't forget to ask if a civil spouse or fiancé has a prior marriage too.*
3. Do not give out forms to Petitioners to fill out (other than questionnaire for formals.) They inevitably fill them out incorrectly. Go over all the forms with the Petitioner.
4. Most forms have check boxes. If we ask for a document (marriage certificate, judgment of divorce, baptism certificate...) we **need that document/form to open the case**. We are always happy to give you direction as to how to obtain documentation. The internet is also very handy. We do not accept “can't find” or “n/a”. If it were not applicable, we would not ask. Again, please call if you have any questions. If the Petitioner truly can't obtain a document, call the tribunal for instructions. By canon law we also must contact the Respondent and, therefore, must have their contact information (address, phone, email).
5. Get started right away with any annulment processes needed for those in RCIA. Too many times we are bombarded a month before Easter with annulment cases. This often puts stress on not only our staff, you and the candidates as well. Coming into the Church should be a time of peace and reflection, not chaos.
6. Finally, visit our updated Tribunal website at: <https://rcbo.org/ministry/canonical-services/> for current forms and documents (updated regularly). You will find some forms on the public page: <https://rcbo.org/ministry/canonical-services/forms/>. E-mail the Tribunal at marriagetribunal@rcbo.org if you need to access the Parish Tribunal Handbook and other forms.