

## ***Annulments – the facts and myths***

### **1. Some facts about marriages and annulments**

- a. All marriages are valid until proven otherwise
- b. Valid Catholic marriages occur when the marriage is done in a Catholic church, with a priest or deacon and with two witnesses present.
- c. Multiple marriages need to be considered separately.
- d. There is no guarantee that a marriage can be declared invalid.
- e. There is no fixed amount of time that the annulment process can take.
- f. All discussions about previous marriages are held in strict confidentiality.

### **2. Common myths about annulments**

- a. Catholic annulments are the same as divorce – no, a divorce dissolves an existing union. An annulment says that, what seemed to be a valid union, was not so from the very beginning. (Ref. Annulments – the Wedding that Was, question 86, page 175.)
- b. An annulment can be bought – no, donations are sought to defray the cost of processing an annulment request. No one is ever denied a hearing because of lack of funds, nor will a generous donation provide a petitioner preferential treatment. (Ref. Annulments – the Wedding that Was, question 95, pages 183-184.)
- c. Annulments make children illegitimate – no, a Declaration of Nullity has no civil or legal effects, [only spiritual effects]. (Ref. Annulments – the Wedding that Was, question 97, pages 185-186.)
- d. A divorced Catholic cannot receive Holy Communion – no, a divorced Catholic may receive Holy Communion if they are in the state of grace and have not remarried outside the Church.
- e. A divorced Catholic is excommunicated from the Church – no, a Catholic is not excommunicated after a divorce. He or she remains fully and completely a member of the Catholic Church.

### **3. Definition of an annulment**

- a. An annulment is an official declaration that a marriage was null and void from the beginning.

### **4. Types of annulments**

- a. Informal case – when a Catholic married outside the Church
- b. Formal case
  - i. When at least one party was Catholic, and the marriage took place in a Catholic church, and are now divorced, or
  - ii. When neither party was Catholic at the time of the marriage and both were free to marry.

### **5. Who should apply for an annulment?**

- a. Anyone who would like to enter a new marriage, or
- b. Anyone who would like to validate an existing marriage, or
- c. For spiritual reasons

### **6. How to start the annulment process: contact St. John's trained and certified Advocate: Marty Knecht, 561-212-9483.**

Some of the above information has been provided by the Diocese of Palm Beach Office of the Tribunal.