



DIocese OF FALL RIVER

Diocesan Tribunal

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REQUEST FOR MARRIAGE NULLITY CASE IN A FORMAL PROCESS: PART II - PERSONAL AND MARITAL HISTORY

In order to determine whether your marriage can be considered invalid according to the laws of the Roman Catholic Church, it is necessary that the Tribunal officials understand your background, the background of your former spouse, what gave rise to your marriage, what happened in your relationship and factors that may have influenced you at marriage and its subsequent break-up. Therefore, **you are asked to write out your story** in your own words, with the following questions to guide you.

The purpose of this statement is to assist the Tribunal in determining if there is sufficient reason to accept your request. The decision will be based upon the facts and concrete examples contained in this narrative account. Please remember that, although **you** are keenly aware of the circumstances and dynamics in the relationship, **we** at the Tribunal are not. Therefore, please carefully follow these guidelines. Be clear in your chronology of events, stating, as precisely as you can, when (month and year) important experiences occurred. Give concrete examples wherever possible.

In preparing your statement, please be advised that the Tribunal keeps all the information received in this study as confidential as possible within the confines of Church law. This law requires that both parties are to be made aware of the allegations made by the other in reference to their marriage. Therefore, in most cases, information submitted by either party will be made available to the other under specific conditions. In addition, none of the proceedings of the Diocesan Tribunal or their outcome can be used to change civil court determinations already made or to be made concerning the divorce settlement, child custody or support.

Each marriage is different, so it is difficult to prescribe a specific length for this statement of Personal and Marital History. Nevertheless, it is the experience of the Tribunal that **twelve to fifteen typed, double-spaced pages should normally be sufficient**. The following questions, while lengthy and detailed, are intended to give a complete background of the total relationship of the parties to the marriage now being investigated. Additionally, please attend to the following directions:

- * Please write out your Personal & Marital History on 8 ½ x 11 inch paper, **preferably typed or printed from a computer**. (Please leave a **1½ inch left margin** for binding purposes.)
- * Type or write on **only one side** of the paper.
- * **Number each page** at the bottom center.
- * Answer all **46 questions** as **clearly and completely** as possible, numbering the question being answered! PLEASE **DO NOT RESPOND** TO ANY OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS **WITH SIMPLE "YES" OR "NO" ANSWERS**. They are not helpful. Responding in full and complete sentences is more helpful than one word answers.
- * Once completed, please give all the necessary paperwork to a Catholic priest / deacon / pastoral minister who will submit your petition on your behalf to the Diocesan Tribunal.

A. Family/Personal Background of the Parties

I. Concerning Yourself

- A1. Describe your own family background. What were your parents like? Describe your parents' marriage and any problems with their marriage. How many brothers and sisters did you have? Describe your relationship with your parents and siblings as you were growing up. Was there any instability or difficulties within your family while growing up?
- A2. Did you have any serious problems (physical, emotional or psychological) as you grew up? If so, please describe.
- A3. Was there any history of physical, emotional, verbal, or sexual abuse in your family background? Please explain.
- A4. Did you or any member of your family ever have a problem with alcohol, drugs, gambling, or any other type of addiction? If so, please describe.
- A5. How did you do academically in school? How were your grades? What schools did you attend? Were you involved in any extra-curricular activities? Were you a discipline problem? Describe the ease or difficulty you had in making friends. Were you shy or outgoing?
- A6. At what age did you begin to date? Was your former spouse your first date or were there others? Was your former spouse your first serious relationship, or were there others? Please be specific.
- A7. Describe your religious upbringing. Was the Church an important part of your life and that of your family?

II. Concerning Your Former Spouse

- A8. Describe your former spouse's family background. What were his/her parents like? Were there any problems in the marriage of your former spouse's parents? Describe in detail. How many brothers and sisters did he/she have? Describe his/her relationship with his/her parents and siblings as he/she was growing up. Was there any instability or difficulties within his/her family while growing up?
- A9. Did he/she have any serious problems (physical, emotional or psychological) as he/she grew up? If so, please describe.
- A10. Was there any history of physical, emotional, verbal, or sexual abuse in his/her family background? Please explain.
- A11. Did he/she or any member of his/her family ever have a problem with alcohol, drugs, gambling, or any other type of addiction? If so, please describe.
- A12. How did he/she do academically in school? How were his/her grades? What schools did he/she attend? Was he/she involved in any extra-curricular activities? Was he/she a discipline problem? Describe the ease or difficulty he/she had in making friends. Was he/she shy or outgoing?
- A13. At what age did he/she begin to date? Were you your former spouse's first date or were there others? Were you your former spouse's first serious relationship, or were there others? Please be specific.
- A14. Describe his/her religious upbringing. Was the Church an important part of his/her life and that of his/her family?

B. Courtship/Engagement: Factors Leading to the Decision to Marry

- B15. When and how did you meet your former spouse? How soon thereafter did you begin to date? How did the relationship progress? How would you describe each of your personalities at this time?
- B16. Looking back, what attracted you initially to your former spouse? Do you know why he/she was attracted to you?
- B17. What did you typically do on your dates? How did you get along during the courtship? Was there anything unusual during the courtship? Were there serious problems, fights, arguments, etc.? If so, please describe.
- B18. What was the reaction of your parents and your former spouse's parents when you began to date? Were you welcomed in their home and vice-versa?
- B19. How long did you date before you were engaged? How long did you date before you married?
- B20. Did you have any separations during the courtship/engagement? If so, please describe what happened and how and why you got back together.
- B21. Describe how the topic of marriage first arose. What brought about the decision to get married? How soon after you began to date did you make this decision? What basic reasons did each of you have in deciding to marry each other? Was there any unusual pressure to marry because of pregnancy, family, military obligations, immigration issues, etc.?
- B22. What was the reaction of family and friends on both sides to the announcement that you intended to marry?
- B23. Did anyone advise you not to marry? If so, why did you not take their advice?
- B24. Did you engage in any premarital sexual activity? If so, how did this affect your relationship, dating patterns, and decision to marry?
- B25. Was there a premarital pregnancy? If so, did it occur before or after you had decided to marry? What was your and your former spouse's reaction to it? Parents' reaction? Did it influence your decision to get married?
- B26. Did you live together (cohabit) prior to the marriage? If so, when and why? Did that fact in any way influence your decision to marry?
- B27. Describe the quality of your communication prior to the marriage. What did you discuss? Did you talk about your future together, employment, where you would live, children, etc.? Describe your problem-solving skills prior to the marriage.
- B28. Were you first married civilly, then had your marriage validated ("blessed") by the Catholic Church at a future date? If yes, please answer the following:
- (a) When did the civil marriage take place? What date was the Church marriage?
 - (b) Why did the marriage not take place initially in the Catholic Church?
 - (c) What were the circumstances that brought about the marriage in the Catholic Church?
 - (d) Was there any pressure to get married in the Church by anyone outside the parties themselves, e.g.: parents, friends, etc.? If so, please explain.
 - (e) Were there any problems in the civil marriage that still existed at the time the marriage was validated in the Church? If so, please explain. If there were problems, why was the marriage still validated in the Church?
 - (f) Did you and your former spouse receive instructions from a priest or deacon before having the marriage validated? If so, what was the extent of them?

C. Celebration of the Marriage: Preparation, Wedding Day and Honeymoon

- C29. Were there any problems in preparing for the wedding? Did you receive any marriage preparation (Pre-Cana)? From whom?
- C30. Do you feel today that your decision to marry was a mature and well thought out decision? If not, why not?
- C31. Did you and your former spouse intend, at the time of the wedding, that your marriage would be a permanent, monogamous, lifetime commitment? If not, please explain.
- C32. Were you and your former spouse, at the time of the wedding, open to the possibility of having children? If not, please explain why you were not.
- C33. At the time of the wedding, did either one of you have any serious doubts that this was the person with whom you wanted to spend the rest of your life?
- C34. Did anything unusual or out of the ordinary happen at the rehearsal, the wedding itself or the reception? If so, please explain.
- C35. Describe your honeymoon (where and for how long). Was it what you expected or otherwise? Describe any problems, frustrations or disturbing discoveries on the honeymoon.
- C36. When was the marriage consummated?

D. Married Life

- D37. What was the first year of your marriage like? Were you happy at the start of your married life?
- D38. Was there anything of importance that you learned about your former spouse after you married that had been kept from you or that you did not know, or that you kept from your former spouse? Please explain.
- D39. How soon after the wedding did problems begin? Please describe what these problems, frustrations or disturbing discoveries were, and how you tried to deal with or to resolve them. If you did not resolve them, why were you not able to do so?
- D40. Did you share these problems with anyone else? If so, what was the result of this sharing?
- D41. Was the sexual aspect of your marriage ever a problem during the time you lived together? If so, please describe the problem(s).

E. Separation and Divorce

- E42. Did you have any temporary separations within the marriage prior to the final one? If so, when were they? What caused them? How and why did you reconcile?
- E43. What caused the final separation/breakup? Were any attempts made at reconciliation or counseling? Why did the reconciliation ultimately not work out?
- E44. Why are you requesting a declaration of nullity from the church at this time?
- E45. Why do you believe that your marriage with your former spouse is invalid/null? Please explain as completely as possible.
- E46. Is there any other pertinent information regarding your marriage that you would like to offer?