



ARCHDIOCESE OF  
**NEW ORLEANS**

Metropolitan Tribunal

***GUIDE TO WRITING YOUR NARRATIVE***

We ask you to share with us your insights into your marriage. The purpose of our inquiry is not to accuse anyone nor to establish blame for the problems of the marriage, but to arrive at a fuller understanding of the truth. We ask you to be as complete as possible in your reply, going into as much detail as you think helpful. The following questions are meant to stimulate your thinking as you prepare a response in narrative form on a separate sheet of paper. Kindly answer the questions using the format outlined below. We may contact you for a court hearing or for more information. **Please number and initial each page and sign and date the last page.**

*I. YOUR LIFE BEFORE MARRIAGE*

*A. Family Background*

1. Describe the life of your parents together and the way they got along.
2. Describe the way in which you got along with each of your parents.
3. Describe your relationship with your siblings while growing-up, and the birth order of each one.
4. Describe how your relationship with family members and the marriage of your parents might have impacted your views on marriage.
5. Had you experienced any problems in adjustment or emotional difficulties in adolescence or young adulthood? If so, how did these issues affect your judgment in deciding to marry or readiness to undertake on the obligations of married life?

*B. Personality and Character*

1. Describe your behavior toward alcohol and drugs; specifically any addictive or abusive behavior.
2. Describe your relationship with the opposite sex, dating habits, and/or any addictive behavior(s); e.g., gambling, internet, cybersex, pornography.
3. Write a brief sketch of your personality; comment on your weak and strong points at the time of the wedding and now.

*II. YOUR FORMER SPOUSE'S LIFE BEFORE MARRIAGE*

To the best of your knowledge, answer the following questions regarding your former spouse.

*A. Family Background*

1. Describe the life of his/her parents together and the way they got along.
2. Describe the way in which he/she got along with each of his/her parents.

3. Describe his/her relationship with siblings.
4. Describe how his/her relationship with family members and the marriage of his/her parents might have impacted his/her views on marriage.
5. Had he/she experienced any problems in adjustment or emotional difficulties in adolescence or young adulthood? If so, how did these issues affect his/her judgment in deciding to marry or readiness to undertake on the obligations of married life?

*B. Personality and Character*

1. Describe his/her behavior toward alcohol and drugs; specifically any addictive or abusive behavior.
2. Describe his/her relationship with the opposite sex, dating habits, and/or any addictive behavior(s); e.g., gambling, internet, cybersex, pornography.
3. Write a brief sketch of his/her personality; comment on his/her weak and strong points at the time of the wedding and now.

*III. MARRIAGE PRIOR TO THIS MARRIAGE*

If either party had prior marriages, then list the marriage(s) in chronological order and provide the following information:

1. Name and religion of spouse
2. Place of marriage (church, hall, etc.)
3. Officiant (name and title)
4. City and state of marriage
5. If deceased, date of death
6. Divorce Decree: Where issued? Number? Who petitioned?
7. Canonical status of each prior marriage i.e., Decree for Lack of Canonical Form and/or Declaration of Nullity
8. Provide the Case name and Protocol Number and the (Arch)diocese.

*IV. COURTSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT*

1. Give a brief narrative of your first meeting with your former spouse, your frequency of dating, where you went together and what you enjoyed doing on dates.
2. Describe your dating experiences and your relationship during courtship. Were there any disagreements or arguments? Did problems arise?
3. How long did you date each other before you got engaged?
4. Describe how the decision to marry was reached. How long was the engagement?
5. Describe what discussion you had about married life, its rights and duties.
6. Describe what discussion you had about the lifelong nature of your commitment. Did either of you see divorce as a “way out”? Please explain.
7. Indicate what discussions you had about faithfulness in marriage.
8. Describe your attitudes and intentions about having children. Did you agree to not have children? If so, why? If you agreed to wait to have children, was this

essential to your agreement to marry? Why? Did you tell anyone of this before the wedding? Who?

9. Indicate the church preparations you had for this marriage.
10. Describe the attitudes of both families toward the wedding and who made the wedding preparations. Were there any objections? Who made them and why?
11. Tell what your friends said of your decision to marry.
12. If your relationship with each other was a sexually active one prior to marriage, when did this begin? How did this influence your decision to marry?
13. Did you feel pressured to marry? If so, who or what was pressuring you and how? Please explain.
14. Were there other factors that had a major influence on you/your former at the time? Please explain.
15. Did either of you hide anything about yourselves from each other to make sure the wedding would take place? If so, what was hidden? Did it become a problem during the marriage? Please explain.
16. Did either of you set any conditions for the marriage to take place? If so, what was the condition and who set it? Did the continuation of the union depend on this? Who knows about this?

#### *V. THE WEDDING*

1. Give a description of what you were thinking and feeling as you were preparing for the wedding, going through the ceremony, and attending the reception.
2. Describe anything unusual that might have happened at the wedding or the reception.
3. State your understanding of marriage at this time.
4. Did either of you have any serious doubts about going through with the wedding? If so, why? Did either tell anyone about your doubts?
5. Had either been drinking or using any kind of drugs prior to the wedding? Where? How much? If so, what was the effect?

**If you and your ex-spouse were first married civilly and later blessed or validated your marriage in the Catholic Church, please answer questions 6-8:**

6. What did you understand the purpose of the Catholic wedding ceremony to be? Did you intend to give a new consent to marriage in this ceremony?
7. What prompted you to get married in the Catholic Church when you did? Did you feel compelled to do so? Why? By whom? If so, please explain.
8. Why did the initial wedding not take place in the Catholic Church?

#### *VI. THE HONEYMOON*

1. Describe where you went for the honeymoon and the length of time you stayed there.

2. Indicate any problems or any significant events that occurred on the honeymoon that would later have an impact during the marriage.
3. Give attention to the development of the sexual dimension of the relationship with reference to any problems or difficulties encountered.

*VII. MARRIED LIFE*

1. Describe the beginning of your married life. Were there signs of future problems?
2. Were there any changes of character or behavior? Please explain.
3. If you had children, when were they born? Did they affect the marriage?
4. If you had no children, what artificial contraceptive measures were used? By whom? On whose insistence?
5. If there were no children, what reasons was stated for the exclusion of children?
6. Explain the contribution and the responsibility of each to the common life in terms of:
  - a. finances
  - b. child care
  - c. household tasks
  - d. support: emotional, psychological, spiritual.
7. When did you first begin to feel that there were serious problems between you? What were they? Did you talk about them? Who knew of these problems? Was counseling sought? If so, when, where, and from whom.

*VIII. THE SEPARATION*

1. Were there separations prior to the final separations? Why? When and for how long? What brought you back together?
2. Give the reason for the final separation; give the date; and how it came about.
3. What was the reaction of others at the news of the separation and divorce? Please explain.
4. Have you anything else to add?

*IX. THE PRESENT SITUATION*

1. What is the present marital status of each party?
2. Is there a marriage(s) subsequent to this marriage for which you are requesting a declaration of nullity? If yes, explain.
3. If you plan to marry, is the person free to marry in the Catholic Church?