

Marriage Situations

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1. Normal / simple marriage
 - Catholic party and a Catholic party, first marriage
 - Are they baptized? Yes
 - Are they confirmed? Not required
 - Prior civil marriage? No
 - Consent -> Marriage

2. Two baptized Catholics who are civilly married
 - Are they baptized? Yes
 - Are they confirmed? Yes or No
 - This creates an irregularity. They are violating the Church's precept to follow the laws of marriage.
 - Needs to be resolved before the reception of **any** sacraments, including Confession

- 2a. Variation: Baptized Catholic party and a Protestant party (most likely baptized) who are civilly married
 - Ecumenical/mixed marriage
 - Requires the permission for an ecumenical marriage, which priests of the diocese can give
 - This is treated just like two Catholics married civilly

3. A Catholic party and an unbaptized party
 - Needs the Bishop's permission
 - It is a nonsacramental marriage, without the Mass

4. Two unbaptized persons marry civilly
 - This is already a valid marriage, not needing any ceremony – A marriage of this type cannot take place in the Church.
 - After Baptism, it is immediately a valid Catholic sacramental marriage

5. Two baptized persons marry civilly

Baptized Christians who are not baptized as Catholic are not bound by the canonical form of marriage that Catholics are bound to. They are bound only by whatever form of contracting

marriage that their ecclesial community recognizes. For almost all protestant churches a civil marriage, i.e. one conducted before a civil official, is recognized as a valid marriage.

Assuming 1) this was the first marriage for both parties and 2) there are no other impediments from the divine law (age, consanguinity, etc.) we recognize the marriage as valid. When the couple then comes into full communion with the Catholic Church, their marriage is understood as valid and no further action is required on their part to regularize it.

The priest needs the following information to determine how to proceed with each couple:

- Baptismal status of both spouses: Unbaptized? Baptized in the Catholic church? Or another church?
- Confirmation status of both parties
- Is the couple already civilly married?
- Does either spouse have any previous marriages?

Beliefs that inform our practice:

- We believe God to have created marriage and to have made very definitive statements about marriage.
- The Church exercises right to impose certain requirements.
- We believe marriage between two baptized to be a sacramental marriage that is indissoluble.
- We believe natural marriage to be valid but not indissoluble.
- A declaration of nullity does not dissolve a marriage; it merely says an essential element or quality was missing at the time of consent.
- Catholics are bound by canonical form, i.e., to get married in the Catholic Church before a Catholic priest. Non-Catholics are not bound by this and we recognize their marriages.
- In a mixed/ecumenical marriage, only the Catholic has to make the promise to continue living the Catholic faith and raise their children in the Catholic Church. The non-Catholic party has to be aware that the Catholic party has made these promises.
- It would be wrong for us to convalidate something that is already valid (hence, no need for an additional wedding)

Ways of obtaining sacramental marriage:

- **Simple marriage** – The exchange of vows for the first time.

This is the ideal. It merits a separate celebration with a Mass.

- **Convalidation** – for cases when there was a civil marriage that is not recognized by the Catholic Church, i.e., when a Catholic is involved. This is a new act of the will. It becomes the new point of reference for the beginning of the marriage.

For those who have been in civil marriages or cohabitating, the standard would be a joint ceremony with the Rite of Marriage outside Mass.

- **Cohabiting Couples** -

For those who have been in civil marriages or cohabitating, the standard would be a joint ceremony with the Rite of Marriage outside Mass.

- **Radical sanation** – Permission to retroactively begin the marriage at the point of the civil marriage rather than at the point of the convalidation, so that the previous years of marriage are considered valid

For those couples with an already-valid marriage, there is no need for a have a convalidation. They could possibly have a marriage blessing.