

A Guide To The Annulment Process (4th Edition)

National Board of Catholic Women





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Foreword to the Fourth Edition

In 2015 Pope Francis issued two *motu proprio*s, *Mitis Iudex Dominus Iesus* for the Latin Church and *Mitis et Misericors Iesus* for the Eastern Catholic Churches. Both documents give new procedures for the formal process concerning the declaration of nullity of marriage.

Pope Francis' emphasis on mercy is at the heart of these changes. The new norms imbue the search for truth with the mercy of God. This has always been the aim. However, quicker processes, the concern that the lack of finance should not be a constraint and the possibility that a diocesan bishop may be able to use their judicial power for the good of those in their care, all contribute to that search for truth and mercy.

I am pleased to commend this 4th edition of the NBCW Guide to the Annulment Process to you as a resource to assist all those in our communities whose marriages have failed, and those accompanying them; and restore to them, with the mercy of God, hope and confidence on the journey of faith in the light of the Gospel.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Peter".

Rt Rev Peter Doyle

Chair Bishops' Committee for Marriage & Family Life

Acknowledgements

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A free electronic version of this resource is available to download from:

www.nbcw.co.uk

www.catholicfamily.org.uk

www.marriagecare.org.uk

Printed versions of the resource are available to purchase from the National Board of Catholic Women priced at £5 including P&P. Please email: **nbcwtreasurer@gmail.com** or download an order form at **www.nbcw.co.uk** or **www.catholicfamily.org.uk**

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Foreword to the Third Edition

I know no family that does not feel from close at hand the complexity of marriage and family life. One survey after another stresses the importance of a stable relationship for secure love between a couple so as to offer that form of family life that best serves the well being of children. Many people, despite deep past pain, long for that relationship in marriage that will last in trust and love. In this complexity there are some situations where that specific step which is annulment can offer new depth to a relationship, a deepening of life together through the sacraments of marriage and Eucharist, and so a renewed space for the well-being of children. It is against that background that with gratitude I commend this publication.

Most Reverend Patrick Kelly, Archbishop of Liverpool

Episcopal Liaison to NBCW (2008)

Foreword to the First and Second Editions

Language students would surely understand the word "annulment" to mean "making null something that was previously valid". But the word has come to be used, in the context of Catholic marriages, to mean "declaring to be null what was invalid from the start". The distinction is important. The procedures described in this booklet concern the review of what seems to be a valid marriage to judge whether it can be shown to have been invalid from the start. The presumption will always be that what seems to be a valid marriage is a valid marriage; the onus lies upon the one who challenges that presumption to prove his or her case.

If after due process the conclusion is that the invalidity of the marriage is not proven, then the presumption of the validity of the marriage stands. The Catholic Church acknowledges no process for making null a marriage which came into being with the exchange of a valid consent and which has been properly celebrated and duly consummated. That said, the Code of Canon Law does prescribe procedures whereby the evidence of possible invalidity of a marriage can be explored, and it is right that such procedures should be intelligible and accessible to all who wish to use them. This booklet, prepared by the Marriage and Family Life Committee of the National Board of Catholic Women, aims to offer a modest contribution to making those processes of law intelligible and accessible.

Bishop Vincent Malone, Episcopal Liaison to NBCW (1998)

Introduction

The aim of producing this booklet is to try and make the nullity process (application for a Declaration of Nullity) a little easier to understand and hopefully less stressful. Divorce in most cases is a painful if not traumatic time for all those involved. To then undergo the process of an annulment may rekindle old pains.

We realise that for many people the nullity process may be a complete mystery.

You may be saying:

- Is it for me?
- Where do I start?
- I've not seen a priest in years
- I'm not even a Catholic

Anyone who is divorced, or in the process of getting a divorce, and thinking of an annulment has the right to approach their Diocesan Tribunal for advice.

We would strongly recommend anyone wanting to know if they might have *Grounds* for an annulment to discuss the matter with the experts on a Diocesan Tribunal.

It is important to remember that there are no short cuts; there is no way of getting a “quickie annulment”.

Annulment is a legal process and, like all legal processes, takes time. There are people who can help you and groups to offer you support. The aim of this booklet is to outline how and where you can go to obtain the help, support and information you may need.

What is an annulment?

It is a decree or ruling issued by the Church to say that what appeared to be a true marriage was, in fact, only the appearance of one; it lacked one or more necessary conditions for a true marriage. This does not mean that the marriage partners were to blame. It was presumed by the Church, including the parties themselves, that there WAS a true marriage, but the Tribunal, having looked at all the relevant facts, have concluded that the partners were mistaken and that the facts prove that there was, in reality, no marriage. This does not mean that there had never been any kind of bond between them but that the bond did not make up what true marriage requires.

Is a Decree of Nullity (i.e. an annulment) a Roman Catholic form of divorce?

No. Divorce in the civil courts signifies that the civil contract between the marriage partners has been dissolved. A *Decree of Nullity* signifies that a true bond of marriage never existed.

The Church is very conscious of its mission to uphold the dignity of the Sacrament of Marriage, a divine institution. This concern is reflected in the procedures of the *Marriage Tribunals*. The Tribunals do not exist IN ORDER to annul marriages, but to deal justly with difficult situations of doubt and uncertainty. Whenever a Tribunal is not certain about a case, for example where there is insufficient evidence, it will uphold the marriage.

What is a Marriage Tribunal?

A *Marriage Tribunal* in the Catholic Church is a Church court, a system of establishing all the relevant facts about what was thought to be a true marriage, and giving a judgement on those facts as to whether there was a true bond of marriage in the first place. That true bond means one which has been sealed by God and is therefore unbreakable by any human power. (“What God has joined, let no man put asunder” Mark 10:9)

The Tribunal is not a Divorce Court, nor does it offer a marriage counselling service. People who approach the Tribunal have already been divorced and may have sought marriage counselling. The Tribunal’s first concern is not the success or failure of a marriage but particularly the circumstances before and at the time of the marriage.

The Tribunal is not shocked or surprised at anything which might be revealed. Their officials are experienced in dealing with every kind of difficulty in marriage. Moreover, the Tribunal does not try to apportion blame.

Do not be put off by appearing before a Tribunal. All parties are seen on a one-to-one basis, in an unhurried, unfrontational manner. Appearing before the Tribunal does not mean facing a panel or cross questioning.

Be prepared

Seeking an annulment of your marriage may be a relatively smooth process or it may be longer and more complex than you had imagined. As we have already suggested it may also arouse painful emotions and memories which are difficult to handle. Through this question and answer section we have tried to provide you with information which will help to clear some of the uncertainties you may be feeling, and prepare you for the emotional issues involved. Our aim is not to discourage you from making an application for nullity to the Diocesan Tribunal, but to help you deal with the process with some measure of knowledge and understanding and, hopefully, less anxiety.



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Surviving the experience of separation, divorce & annulment

Whilst no two marriage breakdowns are the same, the people undergoing them may have similar experiences in terms of the emotional process they go through. Most of us recognise that the death of a loved one involves a process of bereavement. In a similar way separation, divorce and annulment involve a process of loss but it is different from that of bereavement. Understanding what is happening can often help the ability to cope. In all probability you are a normal person reacting to a traumatic situation in a very normal way.

It is likely that for months after the separation has taken place, the former partners will each be re-living events and episodes from the marriage in their thoughts. This is an attempt to understand what happened, to make sense of the experience and most importantly to arrive at an account of their marriage and its breakdown. Each partner of the marriage will have their own account which may be at variance with that of their partner because their perceptions and experiences of what happened are different. The replay of important events in the marriage may often be shared with family, friends and colleagues and is also part of the process of arriving at a simple explanation of what went wrong and who was responsible for what.

The account of the marriage ending may have an impact on how you feel.

For example:

- Intense guilt and remorse may be experienced by those who have ended the marriage because of their spouse's unreasonable behaviour. The worse the behaviour the more likely a person is to feel justified in leaving the marriage partner.
- Infidelity by a partner who leaves the marriage may well result in feelings of anger, bitterness, resentment and betrayal in the deserted spouse.

It may be appropriate to look at the account of the breakdown to understand the context for the very strong emotions that are experienced after a marriage ends. To do this with a counsellor may be helpful.

Most people undergoing a separation will feel emotionally bruised and vulnerable after what may have been a long period of growing unhappiness and alienation from their spouse. These feelings may be coupled with low self-esteem, especially if one partner undermined the other with negative criticisms about such matters as parenting ability, appearance, and ability to manage the home, sexual-performance and behaviour in company. Such vulnerability and low self-esteem can often lead to a period where the ability to think clearly and decisively and make decisions becomes difficult. Apprehension, anxiety, fear or panic, are not uncommon.

Coping with rejection by a friend can often be difficult at the best of times; how much more so when the person in question is a marriage partner. Some may experience a sense of self rejection, dismissing themselves as having been stupid for having married their partner in the first place. Thinking ill of oneself at a time like this may even lead to the rejection of friends and family who try to show affection and concern.



Separation and divorce invariably lead to the break-up of what may be seen as a secure economic unit. A home with one or two earners becomes a home with one or none. Children of the marriage may have to go without some of the items that they had previously enjoyed; holidays and breaks away may no longer be viable, and most difficult of all, a move into alternative, often smaller, accommodation may be necessary.

As well as a loss of a spouse there will also be changes in child care arrangements as former partners address the issue of how to exercise their parental responsibilities for their children. None of this is easy, especially coping with the upset that such a separation causes to children. Remember, all of this is taking place at a time of emotional turmoil but it is important for any children that their parents come to a timely agreement on how best to parent when apart.

Seeking an annulment may well open old wounds for both parties and for some, despite the loss of love, there may still be feelings of emotional attachment which have been hidden. Clearly seeking an annulment has the potential to affect the quality of whatever post-marital relationship you may have.

Remember, whether or not you obtain an annulment, the process has the potential to affect your own perception of your role in the life of the Church and of your identity.

You may want to think about the kind of support that may be helpful to you at this time. Support can come from a variety of different sources and may be informal, e.g. family, friends, relatives, colleagues, or more formal, e.g. support groups, self-help groups, parish priest, counsellors/therapists. The type of support that would be most appropriate for you will be dependent upon such issues as:

- How regularly you want support
- What level of support you require
- How structured/formal you want the support to be
- Accessibility in terms of location and timing etc.

In short, how do I start & what happens?

(Please see pages 14 and 15 for an explanation of terms used by the Tribunal.)

The following procedures are only a guide. Different Tribunals adopt differing approaches:

1. Talk to a priest or approach the Tribunal direct (see addresses on pages 22-27).
2. You will be invited to go and talk to someone associated with the Tribunal who will advise you on whether or not you have a case.
3. If you are advised to proceed, you will be helped to draw up the *Petition* and decide on possible *Grounds*. During the process you will be known as either the *Petitioner* or the *Applicant*.
4. You will be asked to give the names and address of several people who knew you or your former spouse before, during and after the marriage.
5. Your former spouse, known as ‘the other party’ or the *Respondent* during the process, will be notified of what is happening and invited to come to an interview and give evidence. At no time does the process require the parties to have any communication with one another. Even if s/he does not cooperate, the case will proceed.
6. The *Witnesses* you named will be contacted and interviewed at the Tribunal Office, a local presbytery, in their own home or other suitable place. Sometimes *Witnesses* live in another diocese or country and the request for them to be interviewed will go to their local diocesan tribunal.
7. When all the evidence has been collected, the *Defender of the Bond* writes a defence of the marriage. Sometimes the *Advocate* will write a paper pointing out areas where the marriage may be considered null.
8. One or more *Judges* meet and look at all the evidence and other documentation. It is their job to decide whether there is sufficient proof that the marriage is invalid. If they think invalidity is proved they say so.

There may be an appeal by ‘the other party’ or the *Respondent*. If so, the case is sent to the *Second Instance Court*. If there is no appeal, the case is concluded and a *Decree of Nullity* is issued.

On the other hand, if the first Tribunal thinks invalidity is not proved, then the *Petitioner* can ask for the case to go to the *Second Instance Court*. They may obtain further evidence, and once again, if they rule in favour of nullity the case is concluded and a *Decree of Nullity* is issued.
9. In very rare cases when there are major differences of opinion amongst the *Judges* the case is referred to the *Roman Rota*.
10. The *Judicial Vicar* will write and keep you informed at each stage.

Who can ask for an annulment?

Either partner of the marriage in question, whether or not they are Catholic. The request to the Tribunal is often made because one of the couple wishes to marry in the Catholic Church. The Tribunal cannot accept an application from relatives of the couple or a proposed future partner of one of them.

How do I apply for an annulment?

You can do so by writing to either the *Marriage Tribunal* in the diocese in which you currently live, or the one in which you were married, asking for the necessary application forms. You will be advised throughout the procedure about the further steps to take. You may have to travel to the Tribunal Offices to be interviewed.

Throughout the process be prepared to give a lot of thought and energy to your application; this will help to avoid unnecessary delays.

The address of the Tribunal in your area will be listed in your Diocesan Directory or Year Book: an annual publication on sale through Parish Churches, possibly most in evidence at the beginning of the year. A list of all Diocesan Tribunals can be found on pages 22-27 of this booklet and also online.

Some Tribunals may recommend that your application be discussed with a priest first. This is presumably to avoid having totally inappropriate referrals made to the Tribunal. However you do not have to go to your own parish priest: you may not know him well; you may feel unable to discuss this particular problem with him. Some people experience reluctance on the part of their parish priest to be involved in their application. It may be that you would find it easier to talk to a priest who is a friend or a total stranger. Should it be difficult for you to approach a priest on this matter, we suggest you write direct to the Tribunal to say so. Our advice is that you do not need to talk to anyone before approaching the Tribunal. As the Tribunal consists of experts, they are best placed to advise you.

How long does it take?

In some dioceses an average length of time would be a year, but it varies from place to place and case to case. In some instances, it may take six months; in others eighteen months. The Tribunal will be dealing with other cases simultaneously, and there are various other factors which can slow down the process. Levels of staffing and staff changes can create delays, and administrative/human errors occur as in any other organisation. *Witnesses* to be interviewed can be difficult to find and live long distances away, even in other parts of the world.

Generally, Tribunals will not proceed with an application until a civil divorce Decree Absolute has been granted. This prevents information given in confidence to the Tribunal from being used in divorce proceedings.

You may feel your case is urgent. The Tribunal is aware that many applicants are wanting to marry in the Catholic Church, having become involved in a new relationship, but it is unwise for an applicant, (or the *Petitioner*), to set a wedding date before an annulment has been granted. No Catholic priest can conduct the marriage of a divorced person unless or until the first marriage has been declared null and void by a Church court. It is important that a correct decision is given on sufficient evidence rather than to risk a “NO” without such evidence.

If you have any queries about the length of time you are waiting, we would suggest you write to the *Administrator* or *Officialis* of the Tribunal, but do temper the need to know about how the process is going with a certain amount of patience.

If your case needed to go to Rome for a decision, this would inevitably take much longer, but very few cases go to Rome.

How much will it cost?

This varies from diocese to diocese but no case is refused or delayed through an inability to pay. The cost involves the payment of wages to the lay staff and the general costs of running an office (telephone, stamps, stationery, office equipment, electricity, rent etc.)

Ordained members of the Tribunal do not receive a salary as such. Most are part-time, with other roles, such as parish priest. Most of the canonical staff (experts and *Canon Lawyers*), are priests, but there are also men and women religious who receive a reduced salary, according to the diocesan scale and a few lay persons who are paid by arrangement. The Tribunal has to be subsidised by diocesan funds (donations made by church goers). In cases of real hardship the fees may be waived entirely. A person such as the Financial Secretary of the Tribunal will probably check with the *Petitioner* how much he or she thinks it is possible to pay. Instalments are often considered. However, financial difficulties on the part of the *Petitioner* are never an obstacle to receiving full and efficient justice in the Church.

Are Decrees of Nullity easier to obtain today than they were in the past?

Only in the sense that in the past few decades the Tribunals have come to a better understanding of the workings of the human heart and mind. This has been gained through the development of modern psychology which shows that some people have not “grown up” sufficiently by the time of their wedding to appreciate what is entailed in so serious a commitment as marriage. This does not mean, of course, that the couple should be able to foresee all the snags in a particular marriage. It means that where there is a GROSS lack of appreciation or evaluation of the proposed marriage so that there is an enormous gap between the party’s *Consent* and the reality of the lifelong commitment to another human being, there can be no marriage.

Books on the subject of annulments, *Marriage Tribunals* and *Canon Law* are listed at the back of this booklet.

In compiling this booklet we have sought to avoid a checklist approach by which readers can try to discern whether or not they may have *Grounds* for an annulment. We believe that such matters are best discussed with experts on the Tribunal because every case is different and it is the work of the Tribunal to help you with this.

How many Petitioners are successful?

Only those who have been able to satisfy the Tribunal that *Grounds* for nullity exist. It is sometimes possible for an experienced *Canon Lawyer* to give an idea of the possible outcome of a case when the *Petitioner* has made his/her sworn statement, but *Witnesses* to the truth of the facts are also required. The *Respondent* or ‘the other party’ to the marriage in question can sometimes present a view of the marriage very different from that of the *Petitioner*. Before a *Decree of Nullity* can be given, the courts must be certain of their verdict.

It is crucial NOT to assume the outcome of an application. It may cause great pain and distress as well as unnecessary disappointment.

Who can be a witness?

Anyone who knows the parties concerned, e.g. parents, friends, relatives, business associates; they do not have to be Catholics. It is best to choose those who knew either party well at the time of the wedding or just before or just after it. The court has to build up as complete a picture of the marriage in question as possible, and a marriage always involves two persons. It is not up to the Tribunal to find the evidence; this is up to the *Petitioner*, but advice is given as to how to go about it.

Sometimes *Witnesses* are hard to find. It may be that the people who knew you well at the time of your marriage are no longer living, have moved away and lost touch, or do not wish to be involved for a variety of reasons. It is important to remember that people often do not understand the nature of annulments and *Marriage Tribunals*, and find the breakdown of marriage distressing, particularly that of someone close to them. They may be unhappy about getting involved in a 'legal' process, or be afraid that their statements may damage your case. They may feel that their involvement in some way contributes to the breakdown of the marriage. When both parties to the marriage have relatives in common, it may be too delicate a situation to involve them. It is quite possible that with some reassurance about the factors above, and having been given a clear understanding of what the process is all about, potential *Witnesses* will feel able to be involved. *Witnesses* are asked to tell the truth, not to take sides.

The *Respondent* to the marriage in question, must be given the chance to give 'their' or the 'other' side of the story, so the *Petitioner* is under an obligation to do his/her best to provide the court with the address of, or other means of finding the *Respondent*. The court has to judge the facts as presented to them in order to see whether they amount to what the *Petitioner* claims: the nullity of the marriage in question.

Sometimes, the *Respondent* or those acting on his/her behalf, feel that the court is simply prying into a marriage which the civil court has already dissolved.

The *Witnesses* are interviewed or asked to give written statements. The interviews may take place in their own homes or other suitable place, and couples would be interviewed separately. Their evidence will be written down and/or taped. The interviews are likely to be by lay people called *Auditors*. The number of *Witnesses* required varies. In certain instances medical information may be required. The *Petitioner* is asked not to discuss the case with the *Witnesses*. Clearly it is important that *Witnesses* are not put under any pressure by the *Petitioner* with regard to the evidence they give.

In contrast to English laws, the Tribunal, following the code of *Canon Law*, can accept hearsay evidence. Evidence given by *Witnesses* in private can be seen by the *Petitioner* and *Respondent* if they ask for it, although it may exclude specific comments at the request of the witness. The Tribunal should also inform you of your right to comment on the evidence, and to present further evidence before it comes to judgement. This process is known as the "Publication of Acts" or *Publicatio Actorum* which binds the court under pain of nullity of the judgement.

What about the status of children in annulled marriages?

This can be difficult to understand. If there is no true marriage, the *Petitioner* or *Respondent* may feel that the children must therefore be seen as illegitimate, a situation which could cause much distress. However the Church regards them as legitimate because they are born of what is called a 'putative' marriage (one which was assumed to be a true marriage). In any case, even if the marriage was not valid, it was lawful up to the time when a *Decree of Nullity* was issued and the children were born within a legal marriage and so are legitimate.

Do you have to produce any documents?

Yes. You will have to provide your divorce Decree Absolute. Sometimes marriage certificates and baptismal certificates are requested.

Do you get help to understand what the procedure is all about?

People often feel that they have not had the process explained fully enough to them at the outset. It may be that it has been explained but that it has been difficult for the *Petitioner* to absorb it due to very understandable anxiety. People usually need new and important information relayed to them several times, particularly when under stress. The difficulty may be exacerbated by the silence from the Tribunal during the different stages of gathering evidence. We hope that this booklet will help to make the process clearer and more understandable. There is a section on the procedure elsewhere in this booklet and we have explained some of the technical language used.

It is vitally important for your own peace of mind that you have the *Grounds for a Decree of Nullity* explained to you at the outset, so that you understand whatever decision is finally made about your case. Should you NOT understand after the final outcome, or indeed at any stage of the process, it would be important to contact the Tribunal Office and ask for it to be explained to you.

Do you get support during the process?

As this is a legal process and therefore a formal one, and the gathering of evidence and the judgement have to be impartial, support such as one might expect in a social work or counselling setting is not provided. Although the Tribunal is a court, the interviews are not conducted in a court setting but in offices or people's homes or other suitable places.

There are sadly, as yet, no counselling or pastoral services in place specifically to support those applying for annulments. However a counsellor from Marriage Care (formerly Catholic Marriage Advisory Council) may be willing for you to talk through the situation with him/her. Dioceses and some parishes do have Marriage and Family Life Educational and Support Services. It would be worth enquiring at parish level (look on the parish notice board, in the parish newsletter, or on the diocesan website) if you do not wish to approach anyone directly) or check under diocesan organisations in the Diocesan Year Book. Although not specifically their task, they may have some sort of support network for those in difficulty. Confidential telephone prayer lines exist too in some parishes, and you may be glad of some spiritual support.

Amongst your spiritual acquaintances there is nearly always someone to whom you can turn. They may know nothing about annulments but they can give you a listening ear or a shoulder to cry on. Sometimes people are afraid to get involved because they don't know what to say, but most people would WANT to help. Support can come from the most unexpected quarters.

Wouldn't it be better to leave well alone and not proceed with an application?

It might seem so when you hear about the possible procedural and emotional difficulties, but some applications go through relatively quickly and smoothly. For many people, too, it can be a time of learning and understanding about themselves, their partner in the marriage, and the circumstances which prevented it from being a true marriage. However painful an honest appraisal of the situation might be, it is often in the end a healing process and may lead to a great sense of relief at having faced the issues and dealt with them. There is an opportunity to make a fresh start and be able to take more responsibility for what happens in your life. For many people who have entered into a new relationship and wish to marry in the Catholic Church, this opens up the possibility of receiving the Eucharist again.

Some Terms Used By the Marriage Tribunal

Advocate - is there to advise the Petitioner and is sometimes called upon to write a paper pointing out areas where the marriage might be considered null.

Affinity - is an impediment which exists between one party of the marriage and the relatives of the other, e.g. if Jack marries Jill, Jack is related by affinity to the sisters of Jill.

Auditor - is the person who interviews a witness and takes evidence.

Canon Law - Church Law.

Canon Lawyer - a person who has studied Canon Law, has a qualification in it, and applies it to a situation in the light of the Church's teaching

Competence - the law only allows certain Tribunals to process particular applications for annulment. The usual Tribunals are a) the Tribunal of the place of marriage, and b) the Tribunal of the place where either the Petitioner or the Respondent live c) the Tribunal collecting most of the evidence.

Consanguinity - is an impediment which exists between blood relatives e.g. brother and sister, cousins etc.

Consent - is the consent or intention of the couple when they exchange their marriage; vows that make the marriage. They marry each other.

Decree of Nullity - the legal document declaring the marriage invalid.

Defective Consent - sometimes a person may well mean all the right things when they exchange vows and get married but there is something which prevents them from assuming the essential obligations of marriage. e.g. psychological reasons, homosexuality, alcoholism, an intention never to have any children etc.

Defender of the Bond - has the job of looking at the bond of a marriage, upholding it, questioning the evidence, and bringing forward the arguments to show why the marriage should be regarded as valid.

Diriment Impediment - is some fact or situation which prohibits two persons from marrying, and if they did marry the marriage would be considered null and void e.g. age, previous valid marriage, certain blood relationships etc.

Dissolution - the difference between a dissolution and an annulment is that a dissolution breaks a marriage bond that is acknowledged to exist whereas an annulment declares that the bond never existed.

Dissolution in favour of the faith - this is a case where one party or both has not been baptized or has been baptised only after the break-up of the marriage. These are cases often referred to as the Petrine and Pauline Privilege.

First Instance Court - the court which accepts the case for its first hearing.

Form - this refers to the public form or ceremony of the wedding. Catholics are bound to a form of marriage, in a Catholic Church.

Form, usually lack of - if a couple (one of whom is Catholic) marry in a register office or a Church of another denomination, the marriage is said to be lacking in form. However, you can apply for a dispensation to marry in a church of another denomination; if you do not, the marriage is considered an attempted marriage. This is not a case for annulment because in the eyes of the Catholic Church

the marriage of a Catholic without the observance of Canonical Form has no appearance of marriage and is subject only to a declaration by the authorities that the parties of this attempted marriage are free of any matrimonial bond. In Canon Law an invalid marriage is not the same as an attempted marriage.

Grounds - the reason upon which a Decree of Nullity can be granted. These are defined in the Code of Canon Law and are quite different from the grounds for divorce used in British Law. Lack of due discretion is one of the two commonest grounds. It is an area concerning maturity. A person may be mature in terms of operating responsibly at work but may have an immaturity in terms of the marriage relationship. Inability to assume the obligations of marriage is the other most common ground. In order to enter into marriage with all its responsibilities and duties, you have to be capable of doing so. So at the time of the marriage a person must have the capacity to establish and sustain an interpersonal relationship of life and love. This demands a degree of maturity - physical, psychic, spiritual and emotional.

Judges - these are the people who will read all the evidence in a case and make the decision whether or not there is sufficient proof that the marriage is invalid. They are Canon Lawyers and usually, but not always, priests. There are however a growing number of lay persons, especially women, who are judges.

Ligamen or prior marriage - a person who is bound by a bond of a valid marriage may not contract a further marriage if they have a divorce but no annulment.

Marriage Tribunal - a Church Court established to examine a marriage in order to judge whether or not that marriage can be declared invalid in the eyes of the Church.

Non-consummation - if a sacramental and valid union has not been consummated, then one or both parties can apply for a dispensation from that marriage. If the dispensation is obtained then the marriage is dissolved.

Notary - is the person responsible for making an accurate written record of all the evidence.

Officialis or Judicial Vicar - is the Head of the Tribunal. The Officialis is usually a Priest who is a Canon Lawyer.

Petition - a request to have the marriage examined for invalidity. It outlines details of events leading up to the marriage, the marriage itself, the subsequent breakdown and the grounds on which to base this request.

Petitioner - the person who applies to the Tribunal asking it to examine the marriage to see if it was an invalid marriage.

Ponens - the Judge who leads the discussion of the case when it comes up for judgement. He has the job of writing the sentence of the court. This takes the form of an outline of the facts, the law concerning the alleged grounds and the law applied to the facts. The latter is a series of arguments showing the reasons for the decision.

President of the Court - the Judge who manages the correspondence and details of the case. Sometimes he is also the Ponens.

Respondent - the former spouse of the Petitioner.

Roman Rota - this is the court in Rome which hears those extremely rare cases that cannot be agreed upon locally.

Second Instance Court - is an Appeal Court in another Diocese. This is the Court which looks at the case when it is referred to them by either the Defender of the Bond, Petitioner or Respondent.

Sentence - This gives the Tribunal's decision and the reasons for it. It is not a punishment as in English Law.

Witnesses - these are people who knew either the Petitioner or Respondent and who are willing to give evidence to the Tribunal.

Mitis Iudex Dominus Iesus

A Brief Summary

Rev Dr Brendan Killeen

In 2015 Pope Francis issued two *motu proprio*s: *Mitis Iudex Dominus Iesus* for the Latin Church and *Mitis et Misericors Iesus* for the Eastern Catholic Churches. They were signed on August 15th (the Assumption of Mary); released on September 8th (the Birthday of Mary) and came into effect on December 8th (the Immaculate Conception). Both documents call upon Mary, the Mother of Mercy, in their conclusions.

These documents give new procedures for the formal process concerning the declaration of nullity of marriage. They assist diocesan bishops to use their judicial power for the good of those in their care. Pope Francis' emphasis on mercy is at the heart of these changes and the new norms imbue the search for truth with the mercy of God:

- **Mercy is based on truth** and the new process is just as thorough as the former one in establishing the truth as to whether or not a marriage is invalid. If there is any doubt then the validity of the marriage is upheld. Moreover, no new grounds for nullity have been added.
- **Access to the Church's judicial system must be free** and it is essential that nobody is put off applying by financial constraints. Many tribunals may still request a voluntary donation towards their costs as long as it is clear that a case will be heard for free and its outcome has nothing to do with any payment.
- **The time taken to receive a decision must be just** and so a tribunal must not delay reaching a conclusion while giving sufficient time to obtain thorough evidence.

The new rules help reduce the time taken to process a case. There are some cases where the nullity of marriage is most evident. In these instances collecting evidence from many witnesses would be superfluous and the full formal process with a judge would be unnecessary. The diocesan bishop is central to this shortened process and he cannot delegate this role to someone else: he is the chief judge of the diocese and this power is intimately linked with his episcopal state. However, the Judicial Vicar and tribunal personnel help collect the evidence, compile the case and provide advice.

The shorter process can only be used when the person applying (the Petitioner) and the other party (the Respondent) both want the declaration of nullity. If during this shorter process it becomes clear that the bishop will be unable to grant a declaration of nullity because of insufficient evidence and that more detailed evidence will be required then the case is transferred to the fuller process.

Until the recent changes if an individual contacted the tribunal of the diocese in which he or she lived for a declaration of nullity the tribunal could not necessarily take on the case. Now that tribunal can accept the case immediately. Not only does this save time but it also enhances the bishop's pastoral care for those in his diocese. Also, to improve efficiency, one judge is now allowed to assess a case; instead of three. Three are still allowed and many tribunals will continue to do so because the observations of each judge are helpful.

If the tribunal gives a decision in favour of nullity then the case no longer has to go to a second tribunal to be ratified. Until the changes two tribunals had to agree on an affirmative decision. It was rare for the second tribunal not to agree with the first and so the removal of this generally unnecessary step prevents delay. Finally, there is now a presumption that the parties and witnesses are truthful which reduces the time taken finding corroborating evidence.

Where Can I Get Help and Support?

ACCORD

Accord in Northern Ireland is a voluntary organization that aims to promote a deeper understanding of Christian marriage, and to offer couples the means to safeguard and nourish their marriage and family relationships.

Telephone: 028 9023 3002 Email: info@accordni.com

Web: www.accord-ni.co.uk

Beginning Experience

Beginning Experience offers weekend residential programmes to those who have lost a partner through death, desertion, separation or divorce, to help them come to terms with their grief so that they can begin again. The weekend is led by trained volunteers who have themselves experienced such a loss and is primarily only for those who are ready to move forward.

South of England

Telephone: 01293 783 965 (Sandra Maishman)

Telephone: 01322 838 415 (Freda Bacon)

Telephone: 01992 642 443 (John Brotherton)

Email: johnbrotherton@hotmail.co.uk

Care for the Family

Care for the Family is a national charity which aims to promote strong family life and to help those hurting because of family breakdown.

Details from: Gareth House, Leon Avenue, Cardiff, CF15 7RG

Telephone: 029 2081 0800 Email: mail@cff.org.uk

Web: www.careforthefamily.org.uk

CEDAR

The Catholics Experiencing Domestic Abuse Resource (CEDAR) aims to create an environment within the Catholic community in which domestic abuse is understood and recognised as unacceptable and where appropriate pastoral responses and advice on issues around domestic abuse are made available.

Helpline: 0808 2000 247 (Freephone 24 hour national domestic violence helpline run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge) Email: info@cedar.uk.net

Web: www.cedar.uk.net

Catholic Diocesan Family Ministry

Family ministry encompasses a range of activities geared towards families at every stage of their life together, in order to strengthen the love between them, their relationship with God and their service to the wider community. Catholic Diocesan Family Ministry Coordinators connect the organisations, agencies and pastors ministering in this way to families' needs.

Web: www.catholicfamily.org.uk

Family Group Movement (England & Wales)

Family Groups are parish friendship groups drawn from the Catholic community, open to any parishioner irrespective of age or personal circumstances, who meet once a month for low cost activities.

Email: familygroupsenglandandwales@gmail.com

Families Need Fathers

Families Need Fathers (FNF) is a registered charity providing support to divorced and separated parents, irrespective of gender or marital status on shared parenting issues arising from family breakdown. FNF's primary concern is to maintain the child's relationship with both parents.

Details from: FNF, 134 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3AR

Helpline: 0300 0300 363

Email: fnf@fnf.org.uk or admin@fnf.org.uk

Web: www.fnf.org.uk

Gingerbread

Gingerbread a support organization for lone parents and their children throughout England and Wales.

Details from: Gingerbread, 520 Highgate Studios, 53-79 Highgate Road, London NW5 1TL

Telephone: 020 7428 5400

Helpline: 0808 802 0925

Email: info@gingerbread.org.uk

Web: www.gingerbread.org.uk

Marriage Care

Marriage Care specialises in helping couples build and sustain strong, fulfilling, healthy marriages, and in providing support in times of relationship difficulty, through the work of nearly 700 volunteers based at 52 centres around England and Wales.

Details from: Huntingdon House, 278-290 Huntingdon Street, Nottingham NG1 3LY

Telephone: (for appointments, bookings and enquiries) 0800 389 3801

Email: info@marriagecare.org.uk

Web: www.marriagecare.org.uk

Mothers Apart from their Children (MATCH)

This site is for mothers living apart from their children, and mothers who have little or no contact with their children. Sometimes separations last for many years, sometimes forever. MATCH is entirely supportive across the world.

Details from: MATCH, BM Box No. 6334, London WC1N 3XX

Email: enquiries@matchmothers.org

Web: www.matchmothers.org

PAPYRUS

PAPYRUS is a national UK charity dedicated to the prevention of young suicide and provides confidential help and advice to young people and anyone worried about a young person.

Helpline: (HopeLineUK staffed by trained professionals) 0800 068 4141

Email: pat@papyrus-uk.org SMS: 07786 209697

Web: www.papyrus-uk.org

Rainbows Groups

Rainbows Groups work with all young people who have suffered a significant family loss, e.g. death, divorce, separation, imprisonment of a parent etc.

Details from: Werneth Grange, Grange Avenue, Oldham OL8 4EL

Tel: 0161 624 2269

Email: rainbowsgb.dc@btconnect.com

Website: www.rainbowsgb.org

National Co-Director (North)

Sharon Melia-Craven

Telephone: 07483 445699

Email: sharon.rainbowsgb@btconnect.com

National Co-Director (South)

Andrea Rodgers

Telephone: 07483 445698

Email: andreal.rainbowsgb@btconnect.com

Non Executive Director and Trustee

Sue McDermott OBE

Telephone: 07725 340623

Email: sue.rainbowsgb@btconnect.com

Relate

Relate is the UK's largest provider of relationship counselling and sex therapy. They also offer a range of other relationship support services.

Telephone: 0300 100 1234

Web: www.relate.org.uk

Restored Lives

Restored Lives has been developed by divorcees and professionals at Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB) to give emotional and practical support to help people recover from relationship breakdown in a safe, non-judgemental environment.

Details from: Church House, Upper floor, HTB Brompton Road, London SW7 1JA

Website: www.restoredlives.org

Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

The Bishops' dedicated Marriage and Family Life website signposts information and sources of support for marriage and family life across the Catholic Community in England and Wales.

Web: www.catholicfamily.org.uk

Further Reading

Mitis Iudex Dominus Iesus: on the reform of canonical processes for the declaration of nullity of marriage, in the Code of Canon Law

Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City (2015)

ISBN-10: 1517374669

ISBN-13: 978-1517374662

Pope Francis, Amoris Laetitia: On Love in the Family

Apostolic Exhortation, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City (2016)

ISBN: 9781784691226

www.ctsbooks.org

Annulment: A Guide for RCIA Candidates, Ministers and Others

McKenna, Kevin E. Paulist Press (2016)

ISBN-10: 0809149575; ISBN-13: 978-0809149575

Divorce & Second Marriage: Facing the Challenge

Kelly, Kevin T. Rev Ed. MO: Sheed & Ward, Kansas City (1997)

ISBN-10: 1556129890; ISBN-13: 978-1556129896

Healing the Wounds of Divorce. A Spiritual Guide to Recovery

Shlemon, Barbara, Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, Indiana (1992)

ISBN-10: 0877934835; ISBN-13: 978-0877934837

John Paul II, On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World (Familiaris Consortio)

Catholic Truth Society, London (1981)

ISBN-10: 0819864498; ISBN-13: 978-0819864499

www.ctsbooks.org

Journey Through Single Parenting: A Practical Guide to Finding Fulfilment

Worth, Jill. Hodder & Stoughton, London (1997)

ISBN-10: 0340651903; ISBN-13: 978-0340651902

Marriage Annulment in the Catholic Church

Brown, Ralph. Kevin Mayhew Publishers, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk (1990)

ISBN-10: 0862091667; ISBN-13: 978-0862091668

Marriage Annulment in the Catholic Church

(A pocket guide to the grounds and procedures for annulment)

Gasche, Stephen. Catholic Truth Society, London (1998)

ISBN: 9781860820397

Prayers for Catholics Experiencing Divorce

Bedard, Vicky Wells & Rabor, William E. Liguori, Missouri: Liguori Publications (2004)

ISBN-10: 0764811568; ISBN-13: 978-0764811562

What Binds Marriage? Roman Catholic Theology in Practice

Buckley, Timothy J. Continuum, London (2002)

ISBN-10: 0826461921; ISBN-13: 978-0826461926

What God has NOT United

Paul Robbins. Minerva Press, London (1996)

ISBN-10: 1858639409; ISBN-13: 978-1858639406

The Dilemma of Divorced Catholics

Catoir, John T. Alba House, New York (2007)

ISBN-10: 1933066067; ISBN-13: 978-1933066066

20 Answers: Divorce and Remarriage

Blackburn, Jim. Catholic Truth Society, London (2016)

ISBN-10: 1784691402; ISBN-13: 978-1784691400

www.ctsbooks.org

Diocesan Marriage Tribunal Addresses

Archdiocese of Westminster

(Consisting of Greater London Boroughs north of the Thames and west of Waltham Forest and Newham, plus the districts of Staines and Sunbury-on-Thames, and the county of Hertfordshire).

Westminster Metropolitan Tribunal, Vaughan House, Francis Street, London SW1P 1QN

Judicial Vicar: Rev. John Conneely (JCL) Administrator: Matthew Gillespie

Telephone: 020 7798 9003

Fax: 020 7798 9012

Email: tribunaldepartment@rcdow.org.uk

Diocese of Arundel and Brighton

(Consisting of the counties of East Sussex and West Sussex, Brighton, Hove and Surrey outside the Greater London Boroughs).

Diocesan Marriage Tribunal, The Bishop's House, Upper Drive, Hove, East Sussex BN3 6NB

Judicial Vicar: Canon Paul Jennings LCL MCL Administrator: Mrs Carmel Keller

Telephone: 01273 859703

Fax: 01273 859713

Email: tribunal@dabnet.org

Archdiocese of Birmingham

(Consisting of the counties of Warwickshire, Oxfordshire, Staffordshire, West Midlands and Worcestershire)

Birmingham Metropolitan Tribunal, 1 Fountain Court (Ground Floor), Steelhouse Lane, Birmingham B4 6DR

Judicial Vicar: The Reverend Joseph McLoughlin BA STL

Telephone: 0121 236 5535

Fax: 0121 230 6279

Email: f.paisley@rc-birmingham.org

Diocese of Brentwood

(Consisting of the geographical county of Essex, comprising the London Boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Newham, Redbridge and Waltham Forest).

Brentwood Diocesan Tribunal, Cathedral House, Ingrave Road, Brentwood, Essex CM15 8AT

Judicial Vicar: Mgr. Gordon Read (MA, BD, JCL)

Telephone: 01277 265283 Fax: 01277 265273

Email: tribunal@dioceseofbrentwood.org

Diocese of Clifton

(Consisting of the city and county of Bristol, Gloucestershire, Somerset, Wiltshire, South Gloucestershire, Bath, North East Somerset and North Somerset).

Clifton Diocesan Marriage Tribunal, Alexander House, 160 Pennywell Road, Bristol BS5 0TX

Judicial Vicar: Canon Richard Dwyer VJ JCL Administrator: Rev. Vincent Calder

Telephone: 0117 983 3907

Fax: 0117 983 3915

Email: tribunal@cliftondiocese.com

Diocese of East Anglia

(Consisting of the counties of Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk and Unitary Authority of Peterborough).

Diocesan Marriage Tribunal, The White House, 21 Ugate, Poringland, Norwich NR14 7SH

Judicial Vicar: Rev. Simon Blakesley (JCL) Administrator: Mrs Sharon Ellis

Telephone: 01508 495168

Fax: 01508 495358

Email: tribunal@rcdea.org.uk

(N.B. All correspondence to this address to: The Tribunal Administrator)

Diocese of Hallam

(Consisting of the county of South Yorkshire, parts of the High Peak and Chesterfield districts of Derbyshire and the district of Bassetlaw in Nottinghamshire).

Hallam Diocesan Tribunal, Diocese of Hallam Pastoral Centre, St Charles Street, Sheffield S9 3WU

Judicial Vicar: Rev Craig Fitzpatrick JCL MA Administrator: Mrs Anne Ashton

Telephone: 0114 256 6450

Fax: 0114 256 2673

Email: tribunal@hallam-diocese.com

(N.B. All correspondence to this address to: The Tribunal Administrator)

Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle

(Consisting of the counties of Northumberland, Durham, Tyne & Wear and Cleveland north of the River Tees).

Hexham & Newcastle Diocesan Tribunal, St. Vincent's Diocesan Offices, St. Cuthbert's House, West Road, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne NE15 7PY

Judicial Vicar: Very Rev Michael Brown BA, JCL, PhD, JV

Telephone: 0191 243 3308

Fax: 0191 243 3309

Email: tribunal@diocesehn.org.uk

Diocese of Lancaster

(Consisting of Lancashire, (the hundred of Amounderness and Lonsdale), and Cumbria).

Lancaster Diocesan Tribunal, Tribunal Office, The Pastoral Centre, Balmoral Road, Lancaster

Judicial Vicar: Rev Sony Joseph DCL Administrator: Samantha Lord

Telephone: 01524 596 062

Fax: 01524 596 052

Email: tribunal@lancasterrcdiocese.org.uk

Diocese of Leeds

(Consisting of the county of West Yorkshire and parts of North Yorkshire, North Humberside, Cumbria, Greater Manchester and Lancashire).

Leeds Diocesan Tribunal, Hinsley Hall, 62 Headingley Lane, Leeds LS6 2BX

Judicial Vicar: Mgr. Andrew Summersgill JCL

Administrator: Mrs Helen Abrahams

Telephone: 0113 261 8029

Fax: 0113 261 8035

Email: tribunal@dioceseofleeds.org.uk

Archdiocese of Liverpool

(Consisting of Merseyside, parts of Lancashire, Cheshire, Greater Manchester and the Isle of Man).

Liverpool Metropolitan Tribunal, Centre for Evangelisation, Croxteth Drive, Liverpool L17 1AA

Officialis: Rev. Fr. Brian Murphy (BA, JCL, MCL)

Administrator: Miss Maureen Stigberg

Telephone: 0151 522 1061

Fax: 0151 522 1062

Email: tribunal@rcaol.co.uk

Diocese of Middlesbrough

(Consisting of Middlesbrough, Redcar, Cleveland, Stockton-on-Tees (south of the River Tees), the cities of Kingston upon Hull and York, East Yorkshire and most of North Yorkshire).

Middlesbrough Diocesan Tribunal, Curial Offices, 50a The Avenue, Middlesbrough TS5 6QT

Judicial Vicar: Very Rev. Stephen Maughan, JCL, BA, STB, PGCE, JV

Tribunal Administrator: Sharron Driver

Telephone: 01642 850505 ext. 226 or 222

Fax: 01642 851404

Email: chancellor.jv@dioceseofmiddlesbrough.co.uk

or tribsec@dioceseofmiddlesbrough.co.uk

Diocese of Northampton

(Consisting of the counties of Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and that part of Berkshire lying between the River Thames and the boundary of Buckinghamshire).

Northampton Diocesan Tribunal, Bishop's House, Marriott Street, Northampton NN2 6AW

Officialis: Rev. Dr. Brendan Killeen Tribunal Administrator: Mrs Margaret Lacken

Postal enquiries only all correspondence to be addressed to the Tribunal Office.

Diocese of Nottingham

(Consisting of the counties of Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland except parts of the High Peak and Chesterfield districts of Derbyshire and the districts of Bassetlaw in Nottinghamshire).

Nottingham Diocesan Tribunal, Tribunal Offices, Willson House, Derby Road, Nottingham NG1 5AW

Judicial Vicar: Fr Peter Vellacott

Telephone: 0115 953 9804

Fax: 0115 953 9808

Email: marriage.tribunal@nrcdt.org.uk

Diocese of Plymouth

(Consisting of the counties of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and the Isles of Scilly).

Plymouth Diocesan Tribunal, St Boniface House, Ashburton, Newton Abbot TQ13 7JL

Judicial Vicar: Rev. Kristian Paver (JCL) Administrator: Brigid McEleney-Smith

Telephone: 01364 645 412

Fax: 01392 412145

Email: Brigid.mcsmith@prcdtr.org.uk

Diocese of Portsmouth

(Consisting of the counties of Hampshire, Berkshire (south of the Thames), Oxfordshire (south of the Thames), Dorset, the Isle of Wight and the Channel Islands).

Portsmouth Diocesan Tribunal, 61a Yorktown Road, Sandhurst GU47 9BS

Judicial Vicar: Rev. Simon Thomson Administrator: Mrs Dani Marsden

Telephone: 01252 878789

Fax: 01252 871120

Diocese of Salford

(Consisting of the Hundreds of Salford and Blackburn in the old county of Lancashire and of Dunsop Bridge).

Salford Diocesan Marriage Tribunal, Cathedral Centre, 3 Ford Street, Salford M3 6DP

Chancellor and Judicial Vicar: Rev. Christopher Dawson

Telephone: 0161 817 2202

Email: tribunal@salforddiocese.org

Diocese of Shrewsbury

(Consisting of the counties of New Cheshire (except parts of Warrington and Widness) and Shropshire with parts of Derbyshire, Merseyside and Greater Manchester).

Shrewsbury Diocesan Tribunal, Our Lady's Presbytery, Cavendish Street, Birkenhead CH41 8AQ

Officialis: Canon John F Gordon

Telephone: 0151 670 0097

Fax: 0151 652 5595

Email: shrewsbury.tribunal@tesco.net

Archdiocese of Southwark

(Consisting of the London Metropolitan Boroughs (south of the Thames) and the county of Kent).

Southwark Metropolitan Tribunal 59 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7JE

Judicial Vicar: Mgr. Canon James Cronin

Telephone: 020 7960 2514

Telephone: 020 7960 2515/6/7/8 (Tribunal Secretaries)

Email: jv@smt-rcdsouthwark.org

British Forces Tribunal

Bishopric of the Forces

Wellington House, St Omer Barracks, Thornhill Road, Aldershot GU11 2BG

Telephone: 01252 348 234 Website: www.rcbishopricforces.org.uk

Scottish National Tribunal

(Consisting of Archdiocese of St. Andrews and Edinburgh, Diocese of Aberdeen, Diocese of Argyll and the Isles, Diocese of Dunkeld, Diocese of Galloway, Diocese of Glasgow, Diocese of Motherwell and Diocese of Paisley).

Scottish National Tribunal, 22 Woodrow Road, Glasgow G41 5PN

Officialis: Mgr Peter Magee

Telephone: 0141 427 3036

Fax: 0141 427 7715

Email: admin@scitribunal.org.uk

Welsh National Tribunal

(Consisting of all of Wales and Herefordshire).

St Brigid's Presbytery, Crystal Glen, Cardiff, CF14 5QN

Judicial Vicar: Rev. Canon Matthew Jones (MA, JCL)

Administrator: Rev. David Hayman

(The Priest's House, Conway Road, Pontypool, NP4 6HL, Tel: 01495 762280

Email: tribunal@pontypoolparish.co.uk)

Telephone: 02920 752389

Email: matthew@3churches.org

Dublin Regional Marriage Tribunal

(Covering the Dioceses of Dublin, Ferns, Kildare and Leighlin, Meath and Ossory).

Diocesan Offices, Archbishop's House, Dublin 9, Ireland

Judicial Vicar: Rev. Paul Churchill

Telephone: 01 837 9253

Fax: 01 836 8309

Email: dublinrmt@eircom.net

Armagh Regional Marriage Tribunal

(Covering the Diocese of Armagh, Clogher, Derry, Down and Connor, Dromore, Kilmore and Raphoe).

15 College Street, Armagh BT61 9BT

Administrator: Rev. John McKeever

Telephone: 028 3752 4537

Fax: 028 3752 8763

Email: armthq@btconnect.com

Down & Connor Office: Armagh Regional Marriage Tribunal.

The Good Shephard Centre, 511 Ormeau Road, Belfast BT7 3GS

Telephone: 028 9049 1990

Fax: 028 9049 1440

Email: tribunal@btconnect.com

Derry Office: 164 Bishop Street, Derry BT48 6UJ

Telephone: 028 7136 2475

Fax: 028 7126 0970

Email: tribunal@derrydiocese.org.uk

Cork Regional Marriage Tribunal

(Covering the Dioceses of Cashel, Colyne, Cork and Ross, Kerry, Limerick, Waterford and Lismore).

Tribunal Offices, St. Finbarr's West, The Lough, Cork, Eire

Judicial Vicar: The Very Rev. Gerard Garrett (MCL, LCL)

Secretary: Marlies Ferriter

Telephone: 021 496 3653

Email: ggarrett.tribunal@eircom.net

Galway Regional Marriage Tribunal

(Covering the Dioceses of Galway, Tuam, Killala, Killaloe, Clonfert, Elphin, Ardagh and Clonmacnois and Achonry).

Galway Regional Marriage Tribunal, 7 Waterside, Woodquay, Galway, Eire

Officialis: Fr. Albert McDonnell STL,JCL

Administrator: Ms Mairead Ui Mhurchadha

Telephone: 091 565179

Fax: 091 563512

Email: 7waterside@eircom.net

National Marriage Appeal Tribunal of Ireland

The Columba Centre, Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland

Defender of the Bond: Fr. Brian Kavanagh

Administrator: Stephanie Walpole

Telephone: 01 505 3119

Information about the National Board of Catholic Women (NBCW)

The NBCW is a consultative body to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. It has links with both individual dioceses and membership organisations. In addition, there are non-member organisations with which it has liaisons. Details of these are given below.

Further information is available at www.nbcw.co.uk

Dioceses with Links to NBCW

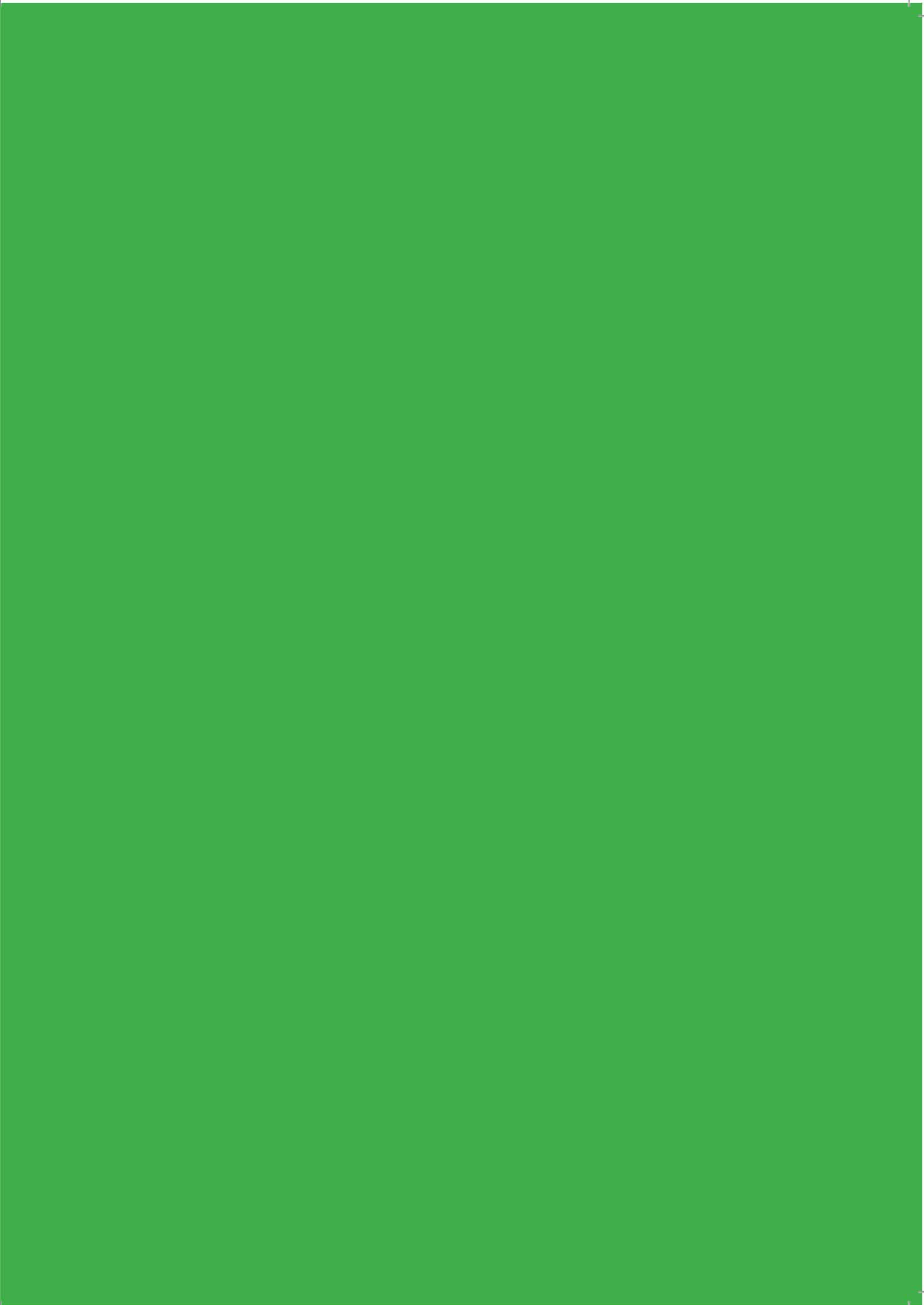
Arundel and Brighton	Birmingham
Hexham and Newcastle	Lancaster
Northampton	Nottingham
Plymouth	Salford
Southwark	Wrexham

Organisations in membership of NBCW

British Federation of Notre Dame Associations
Catholic Association of Teachers in Schools and Colleges
Catholic Association for Racial Justice
Catholic Medical Association
Catholic People's Weeks
Catholic Women's League
Christian Life Communities
Conference of Religious
English Society of the Grail
Marriage Care
National Conference of Secular Institutes
National Justice and Peace Network
Newman Association
Union of Catholic Mothers
Union of Catholic Mothers Wales
Women Word Spirit
Women @ the Well

Faith Based Liaison & Secular Links

Andante
CAFOD
Catholic Union / Parliamentary and Public Affairs Committee
Housing Justice
National Alliance of Women's Organisations [NAWO]
National Council for Lay Associations
National Council of Women
Women's Interfaith Network
Women's World Day of Prayer
WUCWO [World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations]





The NBCW is a forum, founded in 1939, in which Catholic women of England and Wales come together to share their views and concerns at diocesan and national level. The NBCW is a Consultative body to the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and has consultative status with the United Nations (ECOSOC).

Further information is available at www.nbcw.co.uk

First published in 1998 and now in its 4th edition, the National Board of Catholic Women's Guide to the Annulment Process seeks to de-mystify the annulment process, making it easier to understand, and hopefully less stressful.

This new edition takes account of *Mitis Iudex Dominus Iesus*, 'The Gentle Judge, our Lord Jesus, the Shepherd of Souls', the document issued by Pope Francis, which gives a more streamlined and readily accessible way of proceeding in cases concerning the declaration of the nullity of a marriage.

These changes to the judicial process were announced by the Holy Father in Rome, 'near the tomb of Saint Peter, on the 15th day of August, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary'. They came into effect on December 8th 2015 on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, at the very start of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, which offered the faithful the opportunity to reflect on the tender love of God in our world, and to seek to draw others into experiencing that love and mercy.



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'Since the bishop as a good shepherd, must attend to his poor faithful who need particular pastoral care, and given the sure collaboration of the successor of Peter with the bishops in spreading familiarity with the law, it has seemed opportune to offer, together with the detailed norms for the application to the matrimonial process, some tools for the work of the tribunals to respond to the needs of the faithful who seek that the truth about the existence or non-existence of the bond of their failed marriage be declared.'

Pope Francis, *Mitis Iudex Dominus Iesus*
