



Step-by-Step Guide for Introducing a Petition for Declaration of Nullity

(Revised June 28, 2024)

1. Select a Case Sponsor

- *Choose a Case Sponsor:* A Case Sponsor from your home parish is preferred
- *Alternative Options:* if uncomfortable with your parish, approach another parish and explain your need for anonymity.
- *Assistance from the Tribunal:* If you cannot find a Case Sponsor, contact the Tribunal for help
- *Role of the Case Sponsor:* Your Case Sponsor will usually serve as your Procurator-Advocate.

2. Complete the Required Forms

- *Forms Needed:* With the help of your Case Sponsor, fill out the Petition for Investigation of a Matrimonial Bond and the appropriate Petitioner's Questionnaire.
- *Form Completion:* Forms are fillable and should be typed if possible. If not, print clearly in black ink.
- *Documentation:* Submit original or certified copies of ecclesiastical and civil documents. Keep photocopies of all materials you submit to the Tribunal.

3. Tell Your Story

- *Provide Facts:* Give necessary facts without assigning blame. You don't need to build yourself up at the expense of the other party.
- *Transparency:* Be frank and honest. Your former spouse will read your declaration, as you will read theirs.

4. Include Pertinent Information

- *Detail Matters:* Provide all necessary information, even if it feels personal. Your Case Sponsor/Procurator-Advocate can guide you in writing complete and honest answers.

5. Inform Your Former Spouse

- *Notification:* If possible, alert your former spouse to expect contact from the Tribunal and enlist their support.
- *Address Verification:* Provide the Tribunal with your former spouse's current address.

6. Provide Witness Information

- **Witness Selection:** Provide names and current addresses of at least four “fact witnesses” who knew you and your former spouse during dating and at the time of your wedding.
- **Witness Agreement:** Secure agreement from witnesses before listing them. Witnesses will provide written testimony and may rarely be asked to appear in person.``
- **Integrity of Testimony:** Avoid coaching witnesses, as compromised testimony can result in a mistrial.

7. Consider Expert Witnesses

- **Professional Input:** Release expert witnesses such as counselors, health professionals, clergy, or social workers who might know about your marriage.

8. Liaison with the Tribunal

- **Communication:** Your Procurator-Advocate will be your liaison with the Tribunal. Periodically contact them to check on the case instead of contacting the Tribunal directly.

9. Wait to Set a Wedding Date

- **Final Decision:** Do not set a date for a wedding in the Catholic Church until you receive a final decision from the Tribunal and fulfill any stipulations.
- **Clergy Awareness:** Parish clergy and staff know they must wait until all stipulations are fulfilled before assisting with wedding plans.

10. Notify of Address Changes

- **Address Updates:** Inform the Tribunal in writing of any address changes for yourself, your former spouse, or any witnesses.