



*Marriage is an icon of God's love.*

“Marriage is a precious sign, for ‘when a man and a woman celebrate the sacrament of marriage, God is, as it were, ‘mirrored’ in them; he impresses in them his own features and the indelible character of his love.”

- Pope Francis  
*Amoris Laetitia*  
(*The Joy of Love*), 121

## QUESTIONS?

Begin by talking to a priest or deacon about your unique story.

If you need further help, contact the following:

### Family Life:

617.746.5801

[marriageprep@rcab.org](mailto:marriageprep@rcab.org)

### Canonical Affairs:

617.746.5652

*“While we have enjoyed a wonderful marriage and family for over 30 years, we feel stronger and closer as a married couple now that we have God’s blessing.”*

### THE LONGS

*“Choosing to convalidate our marriage meant so much to both of us. It allowed us to reaffirm our love and commitment to one another and grow in our faith.”*

### THE MCGUALEYS



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## Convalidation

**A GUIDE  
TO BRINGING  
YOUR MARRIAGE  
INTO THE  
CATHOLIC CHURCH**

## *How do Catholics view marriage?*

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As Catholics, we understand marriage as a divine calling or vocation. Christians are called to holiness, yet we live that out in diverse ways. A couple married in the Catholic faith believes marriage is a lifelong covenant of unity and fidelity made freely, intentionally, and mutually between one man and one woman for their happiness and the welcoming and education of children. When two Christians are married in the eyes of the Church, their marriage is a sacrament. The divine grace they receive enables them to live out their solemn promise and pursue heaven.

## *What is a convalidation?*

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Convalidation is a process for a couple married outside of the Catholic faith to bring their marriage into the Church. In the community of faith, their marriage will be strengthened by God's grace. If you were married outside of the Catholic tradition for whatever reason without a proper dispensation, the Catholic Church invites you to seek the gift that God has waiting for you.

Convalidation is not merely a blessing. The simple ceremony involves a new consent where the couple freely, mutually, and intentionally make their vows to one another in front of their two witnesses and a member of the clergy. You can celebrate the convalidation within a Mass or outside of a Mass. After your sacred union is convalidated, visit the sacraments of Mass and Reconciliation often to receive the graces that will help you grow in holiness together.

## *How do we have our marriage convalidated?*

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Every couple's situation is unique. Make an appointment with a parish priest, deacon, or parish delegate to get the process started. They will take time to get to know you and your story as a couple. You will need to provide sacramental records (where applicable) and a certificate of civil marriage. The person preparing you may also ask you to participate in some form of marriage enrichment. A date for the ceremony will be set when everything is in place.

## *What if one or both of us were married before?*

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For a couple to have their current union recognized and blessed by the Church, the Church first ensures that each person is free to engage in a marriage, meaning there has been no previous union according to the Church's understanding of marriage. Depending on your situation, you may need an annulment first. An annulment is not a "Catholic divorce." It is a reflective process to determine whether a previous union was considered a valid and/or sacramental marriage by the Catholic Church. Please speak to a priest to learn more.

## *What are the benefits of a convalidation?*

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- + Two Catholics or a Catholic and a baptized Christian spouse will enjoy the supernatural grace from the Sacrament of Matrimony.
- + The covenant with one another and the covenant with God will strengthen the couple for the journey ahead. "Where one alone may be overcome, two together can resist. A three-cord is not easily broken" (Eccl 4:12).
- + Catholics married in the Church can receive the True Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.
- + The Catholic can be a role model for others by being a godparent/sponsor for Baptism and/or Confirmation.
- + A baptized Catholic and a non-baptized spouse will have their union welcomed into the Catholic Church and receive the grace available to all natural marriages.

