



Think you need an annulment? Want to know more about it? Here is a short guide to getting started:

1 – Buy and read my short, easy book. It will answer a lot of questions that you won't initially know to ask and give you more info than you will get at the average parish meeting. It will also help you understand the basic requirements of a valid marriage bond, the premise of annulment, and a detailed checklist to help you determine grounds. Link: <https://rosesweet.com/store>

2 – Understand you will be petitioning a court (tribunal) through your parish. While not exactly like civil court, you *will* need someone to listen completely to your whole story, guide you, answer questions, help you prepare your testimony so that it is sufficient and effective, help you with identifying the best witnesses, explain the whole process and the correspondence that comes from the tribunal, and *much more*. Make sure you have someone who will walk you through the whole process and not just give you the minimal information. *That would be like going to court with the help of a well-meaning friend but no experienced lawyer.*

3 – Do not let anyone just hand you a large packet and instruct you to complete it. You must have a basic understanding of your case and the grounds on which you are seeking nullity. You must address those grounds specifically in your written testimony. You must select witnesses who can clearly and honestly address the grounds. Otherwise your case is likely to be rejected along the way. Very few will tell you that.

4 – To understand grounds, you need someone to hear your whole story. The most common grounds for nullity are called “psychological” and they involve the mindsets of the two spouses on the day of the wedding. Someone must help you understand what makes a marriage bond valid or not, and help you identify what may have been a problem from the start. You will have to trust that person and be able to open up to share some uncomfortable or painful truths about your spouse, yourself, your pasts, and even your families. The whole process is about uncovering truth; as painful or embarrassing as it may be, Jesus assures us that the truth will indeed set us free. *Be completely honest and don't hold back.*

5 – Know that you may ask some parts of your story to be kept private. Judges can't determine the truth without sufficient truth, but something you share may cause serious problems with a family relationship or even fear of danger from your spouse. In those cases, just tell the judges the circumstances and what you fear, and

they will determine how best to handle it to keep you safe.

6 – Your witnesses will not be able to see, read, or know any testimony.

You and your spouse, should he/she participate, will be able to read each other's testimony (as well as that of the witnesses on both sides) right before it goes to the judges. *The exception is anything you asked to be withheld from your spouse as private as possible of causing a serious problem.* While you may not want to read it, if you suspect your spouse or others may be lying, it is helpful to know what they are saying so that you have a last-chance to rebut it before the case goes to the judges.

7 – If you have a formal case, it may take almost a year or more.

Tribunals are not always staffed with full time workers. Case-loads are large in some areas. Witnesses not quickly responding to their summons to participate in your case are most often the cause of long delays. If someone at the parish can't help you, talk to your tribunal staff about what to expect.

8 – If you have a documentary case, it may only take a few weeks.

These "short form" annulments do not require long testimony or witnesses. This is usually when a baptized Catholic married outside the Church or had a defect or "lack of form" required for a valid marriage bond. Check with the parish; doublecheck with the tribunal if you still have questions.

9 – You begin the process at the parish but should have a competent advocate.

Start by calling your parish office and making an appointment. An "advocate" is an experience man or woman who will present your case to the judges for you. Sometimes they are at the tribunal and you never meet or talk with them, while someone at your parish assists you. For more complex cases—or where you feel frustrated with the person at your parish—you have the legal right to ask the tribunal for an advocate to contact and work directly with you.

10 – Your testimony must be able to lead the judges to an affirmative decision.

Your marriage bond is already considered valid and cannot be broken unless you provide sufficient, detailed evidence; your testimony and that of the witnesses must be credible, detailed, and directed at grounds enough that it allows the judges to grant an affirmative decision. The burden of proof is on you. Many cases that should have been granted annulment are denied for a variety of reasons that can be avoided.

Not everyone at the parish—even pastors—has the understanding and experience to help you get your testimony to the level the judges need for a Declaration of Nullity.

If you are frustrated after you go to the parish, are still confused, can't get your questions answered, or want to have your testimony fully outlined before you go to the parish CALL ME. For a reasonable fee, I can serve as your outside consultant.

email me: rose@rosesweet.com