

# What are the steps of a formal case?

## Step 1: Complete Fact Sheet and Questionnaire

This paperwork is provided to you by an annulment companion or a priest to request the Tribunal to accept your case for an annulment. The petitioner also submits all documents that are necessary for the case with this paperwork. The documents required include an original certificate of baptism, civil marriage license and divorce decree, and the names and addresses of four witnesses.

## Step 2: Locating the Respondent

The petitioner should contact the respondent that he or she is seeking an annulment if that is possible. The annulment companion or the Tribunal can assist a petitioner locate a respondent.

## Step 3: Acceptance of *Libellus*

The Tribunal will decide to accept the petition (a *libellus*) if there are any possible grounds to hear the case and assign the various roles to form a court.

## Step 4: Citation of the Parties

The respondent is contacted by the Tribunal and given an opportunity to participate in the proceedings.

## Step 5: Evidence Collection

The witnesses will be contacted and further evidence will be gathered. A petitioner may be asked to testify in person at the Tribunal to further assist them in their case.

## Step 6: Publication of the Acts

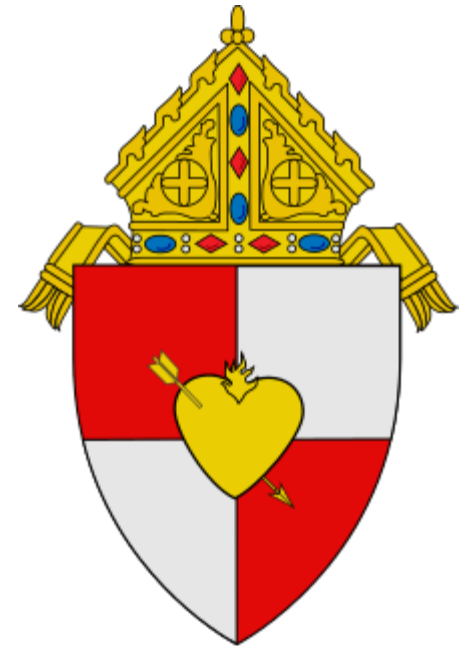
The collection of evidence is completed and the advocates compose their briefs and submit them to the judges.

## Step 7: Decision and Sentence

The judges make their ruling and a formal Publication of Sentence is issued. If the decision was in the affirmative, fifteen days must pass before the final decree is issued.

## Step 8: Appeals

An appeal may be made by any party to the Tribunal within fifteen days of the Publication of Sentence. The case will then be heard by a Court of Second Instance. If no appeal is made, the final decree is issued.



# WHAT IS THE ANNULMENT PROCESS?

**Diocese of St. Augustine**  
Office of the Tribunal





## How do I begin?

The way to begin the annulment process is to contact your local parish and speak with a priest or an annulment companion in your area. An annulment companion assists you throughout the process in determining the type of annulment that is necessary as well as assisting you in preparing the documents necessary for the process.

## How long does it take?

Each annulment case is unique, so it is impossible to predict the length of time because of a number of variable factors. One case may take several weeks, while another case may take a year or longer. Most annulments are completed in 10-12 months if all parties participate in the process.

## What type of annulment do I need?

Your annulment companion or priest will help you determine what type of annulment you need. Each type of annulment involves a different set of requirements and paperwork.

### Solemn or Formal Case

A solemn or formal case is one in which the validity or invalidity of a marriage is determined through the collection of evidence and testimony from the spouses and witnesses. These cases are the typical way in which a person obtains an annulment from the Tribunal.

Formal cases determine the possible invalidity of marriage based on whether one of the parties had an impediment or a lack of ability to consent to the Church's understanding of marriage.

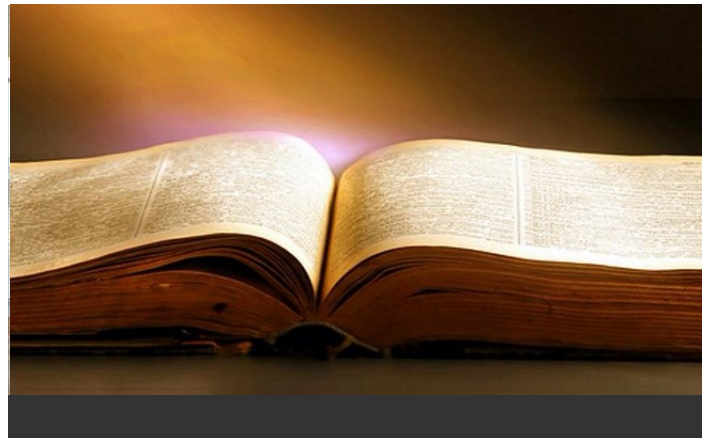
*Pope Francis has introduced a briefer process for a formal case when both the petitioner and respondent agree to participate in the case under certain conditions. Contact the Tribunal if both parties are willing to possibly participate in the briefer process.*

### Documentary Case

A documentary case is one in which the validity or invalidity of a marriage is determined by means of a collection of documents that are not subject to contradiction. The most common documentary cases are for Catholics who married outside of the Catholic Church (Lack of Canonical Form) or for individuals who married someone who was married before and did not obtain an annulment (*Ligamen*).

### Privilege Case

A privilege case is a procedure that is sometimes used when at least one of the spouses was unbaptized at the time of the marriage. The case focuses on the baptismal status at the time of the marriage. These cases can be more complex than a formal case and are rarely used.



## Contact Us

**Diocese of St. Augustine**

**Office of the Tribunal**  
2598 Forbes Street  
Jacksonville, Florida 32204

(904) 800-2393  
tribunal@dosaf.com

Visit us on the web: [www.dosaf.com](http://www.dosaf.com)