

Married Outside the Church?

# COME HOME — TO THE GRACE OF A — CATHOLIC MARRIAGE

You can still have the wedding you always dreamed of and let Jesus grace your union through a process called **convalidation**.



ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK  
FAMILY LIFE

## AN ENGRAVED INVITATION

FOR COUPLES MARRIED  
OUTSIDE THE CHURCH



**D**ear brothers and sisters in Christ, First, let me say how happy I am for you. If you have found the person with whom you wish to spend the rest of your life, you have been truly blessed. And if you are one of the many Catholics who married outside the Church, there is even greater joy in store for you. *I invite you to bring your marriage home to Jesus. I invite you to consecrate your bond in the sacrament of holy matrimony.*

By looking to your faith and the Church, you can count on more than just human nature to bring you happiness in your marriage – you can count on divine grace, as well as the loving support of your parish community, the strengthening of family ties, the deepening of your spiritual bond as a couple, and the accompaniment of Jesus on your lifelong journey together.

And please don't worry for a moment that you will be judged by the Church or your parish priest when you ask for a sacramental marriage. Trust me, you will be welcomed with open arms. The pamphlet you're holding now will tell you how to begin the process.

I want you to have a blessed lifelong marriage in which you grow together in appreciation of your faith. Please join us and let the Lord come more fully into your lives.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

+ *Tim. Card. Dolan*

Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan  
Archbishop of New York

## BENEFITS OF MARRIAGE IN THE CHURCH



### *Sacraments and Grace*

Jesus draws you closer to Him, strengthening your marriage and helping you become better spouses, better parents.



### *Faith and Family Values*

Catholic marriage builds Christian love and helps you pass on the faith to your children and other family members.



### *Parish Community*

Your faith community will honor and support you as you bring your family more fully into the Church.



### *A Meaningful Life*

The vocation of marriage lets you fulfill your purpose in life, to live Christ's message in your family, parish and society.

“

When a man and a woman celebrate the sacrament of marriage, God is ...  
“mirrored” in them.... Marriage is  
the icon of God's love for us.

”

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



For various reasons, you may have chosen to marry civilly instead of getting married in the Catholic Church. Perhaps there were complicating factors, or you did not understand the value of marrying in the Church, or you did not feel a connection with Christ at that point in your life.

Unfortunately, if you and/or your spouse were baptized in (or received into) the Catholic Church, and you were married in a civil ceremony or under another religious denomination, your marriage (unless you received a dispensation) is not valid in the eyes of the Church. It doesn't have to stay that way, however: **The Archdiocese of New York, and your parish, eagerly invite you now to bring your marriage into the Catholic Church!** The process to do this is called *convalidation*.

Your family life may be going just fine, and your marriage may be satisfying, but there is a tremendous beauty and strength in a Catholic and sacramental marriage that we encourage you to explore. As spouses, you can enter into a deeper and more grace-filled relationship with each other and with God by having your marriage validated by the Church. In the words of

Msgr. Joseph Giandurco, pastor at St. Patrick's in Yorktown Heights, "A marriage recognized by the Church, even after civil marriage, can bring great blessings to a couple. When God joins a man and a woman in marriage, there is a supernatural bond of grace."

Convalidation is a relatively simple process if neither spouse was married before. The first step is to contact your parish (or, if you are not currently enrolled at a parish, then the one where you currently reside) and make an appointment to speak with the pastor or his delegate. The priest or deacon who assists you will advise

“

Inviting Christ to enter into  
our marriage took our  
relationship and family  
to another level.

”

Claudia and Jeff Cortez  
Sacred Heart, Monroe

you about any documents or other items you may need. If one of the spouses had any kind of prior marriage, be sure to discuss this with the priest or deacon so he can help you determine your next steps.

Convalidation is not simply the blessing of an existing union, but the true exchange of consent by the spouses before God, the Church, and each other. Prior to receiving the Sacrament of Marriage, you will need a period of preparation and spiritual formation. Your priest or deacon will guide you in the program that is best for you.

## TESTIMONIALS

"On our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary we had our church wedding and invited all of our family and friends to celebrate with us. It was truly a beautiful ceremony, especially to have our two young children walk down the aisle with us. ... Our yes to convalidation was the gateway to a new way of life filled with peace, joy, hope and a sense of purpose ...the beginning of an amazing journey."

— Claudia and Jeff Cortez  
Sacred Heart, Monroe

"Convalidating our marriage enriched our lives as a couple. Knowing you are in harmony with God fills your heart with so much love and joy that it impacts your relationship and how you live out your marriage. ... We feel more united; we have a deeper understanding of each other and of who we are as a couple. We are more in sync."

— Sidia and Fernando Cortés  
St. Bernard, White Plains



ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK  
FAMILY LIFE

Contact your parish priest for more information  
or to begin the convalidation process.

For general Marriage and Convalidation Preparation  
information, call the Family Life Office at 646.794.3185

Para información en español llame a 646.794.3185

[archny.org/family-life](http://archny.org/family-life)