Dear 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,

Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan
Archbishop of New York

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
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 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.