



ARCHDIOCESE OF  
**NEW ORLEANS**

Metropolitan Tribunal

## ***GUIDE TO COMPLETING THE PETITION AND THE WITNESS FORMS***

1. Complete all the information requested on the petition form. This form is usually sent to your former spouse when he or she is notified that you have filed for a declaration of nullity of your marriage to him or her. However, as a matter of courtesy, inform him or her that you are filing a petition for a declaration of nullity of your marriage to him/her and to expect mail from the Tribunal.
2. Pay close attention to section 5 on the petition form. Your statement therein forms the basis of your claim. This should be carefully written. A brief statement, gleaned from your narrative should indicate the reasons for the alleged invalidity of the marriage. The reasons must refer to the time prior the marriage. For example:
  - i. Neither of us understood the true nature of marriage at the time of the wedding.
  - ii. I didn't want children in the marriage; or he/she didn't want children in the marriage; or we decided to not have children in the marriage.
  - iii. When we married, he or she believed divorce would be an option.
  - iv. During our courtship, my ex-spouse was not faithful and this continued during our marriage.
  - v. I felt that it was my obligation to marry him/her because of the pregnancy.
  - vi. There was abuse, drugs, and alcohol before the marriage, which continued during the marriage.
3. Avoid defamatory remarks, inflammatory statements, or provocative words about the respondent. Also to be avoided is the cause for the divorce. Any reference to the narrative such as "see attached" should also be avoided. The claim should not also be vague. "There is also a reason why the judge should require that it not be vague; in this way it can be understood by a 'lay person.'" (*coram* Burke, 15 November 1990, *Studia Canonica* 25 (1991) p. 515).
4. In section 6 of the petition form, list only the names of your potential witnesses so that the other party may know who is being suggested as witnesses. Full names and addresses are to be noted on the Witness Contact and Information Form.
5. **Completing the Witness Contact and Information Form:** The names of persons who witnessed various important events mentioned in the narrative, their full names and current, complete addresses should be noted on the form, *not* within the narrative. If a witness will have difficulty participating, perhaps because of language, writing skills, or physical problems, indicate this so that the tribunal can make arrangements. It is not permissible to include witness testimony at the time of submitting your petition. Your witness will be contacted due course to provide their testimony.