



HOW TO PROCESS PRENUPTIAL PAPERWORK

(as of May 7, 2014)

Papers for all marriages are to be submitted to the Tribunal of the Diocese of Dallas, except in such limited circumstances as:

1. Two baptized Catholics, both of whom are Latin, and
2. Both of whom are domiciled in the Diocese of Dallas, and
3. The marriage will be celebrated in the Diocese of Dallas, and
4. Neither party ever has been married to anyone other than each other.

Meet with the couple to determine whether either party ever has been married before. If there is a previous marriage, not dissolved by the death of the other spouse, on the part of either or both, introduce a case or cases (Absence of Form, *Ligamen*, Formal, etc.) into the Dallas Tribunal before going any further.

If the marriage involves a party who already has obtained a declaration of invalidity, without going further, contact the Dallas Tribunal to fulfill any stipulations not yet lifted.

If the marriage is to involve a prenuptial agreement, no further arrangements can be made until the agreement is submitted to, and approved by, the Dallas Tribunal.

Discuss location of ceremony. If other than a Catholic church, contact the Tribunal immediately to determine whether a marriage can be held in that location.

Once the above have been resolved, complete Form V Prenuptial Questionnaire, being sure to include, explaining all “*” answers:

1. Date of proposed/upcoming marriage
2. Full contact information (full name, address, email, phone, fax) of celebrant
3. Full contact information (full name, address, email, phone, fax) of pastor and parish of church of marriage
4. Email addresses for bride and groom, if possible
5. Contact information for Diocesan official who is to receive marriage papers i.e. that is, the Bishop or his delegate in the Diocese where the marriage is occurring

If one or both Catholics are not domiciled within your parish boundaries and/or registered within your boundaries, determine why the couple is coming to you. Check with the proper parish to see if there are issues to be addressed.

Determine baptismal status. Obtain current baptismal certificates with notations for Catholics. If the other party is a baptized Christian (but not Catholic), obtain certificate/letter/statement, if possible. Determine whether either or both Catholics are Eastern, rather than Latin. If either is Eastern, the Dallas Tribunal likely will deal with the Eastern hierarchy. If the Catholic is marrying another baptized Christian, a permission for mixed marriage is required (Form III A). If the Catholic party is marrying a non-baptized person, a dispensation from disparity of worship is required (Form III A).

Arrange for appropriate diocesan-approved marriage preparation utilizing either parish or diocesan programs/processes.

Arrange for the administration of the FOCCUS instrument by a certified FOCCUS administrator. Each party completes the instrument individually, not together as a couple. The instrument is submitted to Marriage Ministries for processing and returned to the certified minister for review with the couple.

Complete Form III A “Petition for a Canonical Dispensation or Permission for a Mixed Marriage” and/or Form III B1 “Petition for a Dispensation from the Canonical Form in a Mixed Marriage” as appropriate. Verify that on Form III A the promises have been made by the Catholic party and reasons have been given for the requested permissions/dispensations.

If a dispensation from disparity of worship is granted, advise the couple that the marriage will be celebrated under the auspices of the Catholic Church without Mass.

Arrange for the completion of Form II “Witness Affidavit of Freedom to Marry”; one for the bride and one for the groom by parent or older relative who has known the party since early adolescence.

If the marriage is a convalidation, obtain a copy of the civil marriage certificate or Informal Marriage Registration Certificate.

Send all materials to the Diocesan Tribunal for review

1. If to be celebrated in this Diocese, at least 30 days before the wedding. In this case send photocopies of all papers except Form III, which must be the original.
2. If to be celebrated in another Diocese in the USA, at least 60 days before the wedding
3. If to be celebrated in a Diocese outside the USA, at least 90 days before the wedding

Be aware, for marriages in other dioceses, their time requirements need to be observed.

If the marriage is to be celebrated in a Dallas parish, one week before the ceremony, meet with the couple to be sure everything is in order and to examine their Texas civil marriage license to be sure it is a valid one. (Texas licenses must be obtained at least 72 hours before the ceremony and must be used no later than 90 days after purchase.)

If the marriage involves an officiant other than a Dallas priest or deacon, obtain a letter of suitability dated within six weeks of the wedding date to enclose with the prenups submitted to the Dallas Tribunal. If the marriage will occur in a diocese outside Dallas with an officiant not assigned to that diocese, a letter of suitability may be required.

After the Tribunal has reviewed all paperwork, if the marriage is to occur in the Dallas Diocese, the Tribunal will send you the *nihil obstat* (original) with the signed Form III (original). If the marriage will occur in a diocese other than Dallas, you will receive a copy of the cover letter forwarding the original paperwork to the hierarchy of the other diocese.

If neither party is domiciled in the Diocese of Dallas, original papers will need to be forwarded by the Dallas Tribunal to at least one of the other Dioceses.

REMINDER: After the marriage has been celebrated, be sure the marriage is recorded in the marriage register where the marriage was celebrated and in the baptismal register of the places of baptism(s) of the Catholic party(ies).