Spiritual communion is a devotional practice where a person prays to be united to God. This prayer can be spontaneous, or from multiple forms that can be found online, and it can be said at any time. Often this prayer is said when a person is unable to receive Holy Communion, i.e., actually consuming the body and blood of Jesus. At Mass a person who is only receiving Christ spiritually can either remain in the pew during communion, or they can come forward with their arms crossed in order to receive a blessing from the communion minister.

Yes, once the non-Catholic has received an annulment. The Church believes that a person can have only one valid marriage in one’s lifetime, (except for death of one’s spouse). The non-Catholic marriage must undergo the same review as the Catholic marriage and be declared invalid before one is allowed to marry in the Catholic Church.

The process begins in the parish. A priest, deacon, or pastoral minister will assist you in preparing documents that will need to be submitted to the Tribunal. The length of time varies with each case. There is no cost for an annulment.

The Tribunal seeks to find the truth regarding the question of the validity of the marriage. The process involves contacting the former spouse, gathering written testimony from the parties and witnesses. All testimony is reviewed by Church officials trained in the areas of Canon Law, Theology, or Social Sciences. The Church judge will then issue a decision, with moral certainty, regarding the validity or invalidity of the marriage.

No, the grounds for granting an affirmative decision need to have been present from the beginning of the union. In a few instances cases do not have testimony that supports the claim that from the onset of the marriage something was missing in the eyes of the Church.

The Diocese of Des Moines is here to support you in this process. We understand that petitioning for an annulment can be difficult on occasion, but this process has been developed at the service of mercy and justice. If you have any further questions please contact the Tribunal directly (see below). We are here to assist you and walk with you through this process!

For more information contact:
Cathy Gearhart
Office of the Tribunal
Diocese of Des Moines
601 Grand Ave., Des Moines, IA 50309
Phone: 515-237-5004; tribunal@dmdiocese.org

Frequently Asked Questions About Marriage and Annulments in the Catholic Church

“And as the door of God’s mercy is always open, so too must the doors of our churches, our communities, our parishes, our institutions, our dioceses, be open, because this is how we can all go out to bring this mercy of God.”

Pope Francis 11.18.15

Office of the Tribunal
Diocese of Des Moines
A marriage can be considered null because of either internal or external factors. All Catholics are required to be married following Catholic Form (the Catholic rite of marriage). When this element is lacking an external factor was clearly absent. Practically that means these situations are more easily addressed, and a “lack of form” annulment is approximately a sixty day process with no lengthy investigation. This is just a matter of gathering pertinent documents. If however, Catholic form was followed, the Tribunal must discern whether an internal factor was absent, in which case a more detailed study is necessary.

No, civil divorce does not mean a person is excommunicated. A civil divorce in itself does not damage a person’s communion with the Church. Divorced persons can participate in the entire sacramental life of the Church.

Yes, once an annulment has been issued by a Diocesan Tribunal.