



## CUSTOMARY ON CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

### SECTION ONE – DIOCESAN GUIDELINES FOR THE CLERGY

**Marriage is a COVENANT between a husband(man) and his wife(woman) before God.**

**“God designed marriage to be monogamous, heterosexual, permanent, exclusive, faithful, sexually chaste, Christ-centered, biblically-guided, loving, respectful, sacrificial, and mutually supportive covenant relationship between a man and his wife. Every attempt must be made especially in times of conflict between a husband(man) and his wife(woman) to reconcile instead of getting a divorce. Physical abuse must not be condoned in this Diocese.” Bishop Felix C. Orji, OSB**

**“When you get married, the state views your union as nothing more than a contract. My two lawyer brothers have taught me that a “contract” is simply a document ultimately built on distrust between two parties where each person is primarily concerned only with his or her best interests. God created marriage to be much more than a contract; it’s a covenant. In a covenant, the focus isn’t on your own best interests but on the best interests of another. It’s selfless, and it’s timeless and there’s NO exit strategy. That’s the only way a marriage can really work, but our modern world has lost sight of this.”  
Dave Willis**

*ALL CLERGY SHOULD BE FAMILIAR WITH THE CANONS OF THE CHURCH REGARDING CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE. THESE ARE IN THE NEXT SECTION OF THIS CUSTOMARY. IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE CLERGY OF THIS DIOCESE FOLLOW THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES IN REGARD TO THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY MATRIMONY.*

**1. TEACHING AND PREACHING ON CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE.** *THE BIBLICAL TEACHING AND VALUES OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE SHOULD BE WOVEN INTO SERMONS, TEACHINGS, AND SEMINARS IN THE LOCAL CHURCH ON A REGULAR BASIS THROUGHOUT THE CHURCH YEAR. HOW WILL THE FLOCK KNOW AND BE REMINDED OF GOD’S DESIRE FOR MARRIAGE IF WE THE CLERGY DO NOT DISCUSS IT?*

**2. PREMARITAL COUNSELING.** *ALL COUPLES MARRIED BY A PRIEST IN THIS DIOCESE SHALL HAVE APPROPRIATE PRE-MARITAL COUNSELING COVERING A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS, CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE, COMMUNICATION, FAMILY FINANCES, SEXUAL INTIMACY, LIFE-LONG COMMITMENT, FAMILY HISTORY, AND EXPECTATIONS. THERE ARE NUMEROUS PREMARITAL MATERIALS FOR CLERGY TO CHOOSE FROM, AND SOME CLERGY OUTSOURCE THIS TO LOCAL COUNSELORS. MANY STATES OFFER DISCOUNTED RATES ON MARRIAGE LICENSE FEES WHEN A COUPLE SHOWS EVIDENCE OF PREMARITAL COUNSELING.*

**3. BAPTISM.** *BOTH PARTIES SHOULD BE BAPTIZED, AND IF NOT, THE CANONS REQUIRE THE PERMISSION OF THE BISHOP. JUST SEND A SIMPLE EMAIL REQUEST TO THE BISHOP WITH AN EXPLANATION OF THE SITUATION.*

**4. MARRYING DIVORCED PERSONS.** *THE CANONS REQUIRE THAT THE BISHOP GRANT PERMISSION FOR A PRIEST TO MARRY SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN DIVORCED. FILL OUT THE REQUEST FOR*

REMARRIAGE FORM AND EMAIL IT TO THE BISHOP, AND HE WILL RESPOND IN A TIMELY MANNER.\*  
[TITLE III, CANON 4, SECTIONS 1-3]

**5. BLESSING A CIVIL MARRIAGE OF A DIVORCED PERSON.** WHEN A PRIEST IS ASKED TO BLESS THE CIVIL MARRIAGE OF A PERSON WHO HAD BEEN DIVORCED, THE BISHOP NEEDS TO APPROVE THE BLESSING. A MINIMUM OF ONE YEAR SHOULD HAVE PASSED BEFORE THE REQUEST IS MADE. FILL OUT THE REQUEST FOR A BLESSING OF A CIVIL MARRIAGE FORM FOR A DIVORCED PERSON AND EMAIL TO THE BISHOP, AND HE WILL RESPOND IN A TIMELY MANNER.\*

**6. FORM OF CEREMONY.** ALL MARRIAGES PERFORMED BY A PRIEST IN THIS DIOCESE WILL BE ACCORDING TO THE RUBRICS AND FORMS PROVIDED BY THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER. THE RUBRICS PROVIDE PLENTY OF LATITUDE FOR THE DIVERSE WORSHIP STYLES AND PASTORAL SITUATIONS THAT WE ANGLICANS FACE. IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE PRIEST PERIODICALLY DO A REVIEW OF THE PRAYER BOOK RUBRICS.

**7. MARRIAGE LICENSE.** SINCE AT THIS TIME IN THE HISTORY OF OUR COUNTRY, CLERGY ALSO ACT AS AN AGENT OF THE STATE, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE PRIEST SIGN AND RETURN THE MARRIAGE LICENSE TO THE STATE AGENCY IN A TIMELY MANNER AFTER THE CEREMONY. 2

**8. DECLARATION OF INTENT.** REMEMBER THAT THE CANONS REQUIRE ALL OF US TO HAVE THE COUPLE SIGN THE DECLARATION OF INTENT (SEE CANONS BELOW; TITLE TWO, CANON 7, SECTION 6). THIS CAN BE DONE AS PART OF PREMARITAL COUNSELING, BEFORE THE CEREMONY AT THE REHEARSAL, OR BOTH.

**9. CONSCIENCE.** AT NO TIME SHOULD A PRIEST FEEL OBLIGATED TO CONDUCT A MARRIAGE HE DOES NOT BELIEVE IS APPROPRIATE. YOU CAN SAY "NO." IF YOU NEED THE BISHOP TO SAY NO FOR YOU BECAUSE OF PASTORAL CONSIDERATIONS, CONTACT THE BISHOP.

**10. A DECLARATION OF NULLITY.** A DECLARATION OF NULLITY "MAY" BE ISSUED BY THE BISHOP OF THIS DIOCESE FOR SOMEONE MARRIED BY AN ANGLICAN PRIEST AND WHOSE MARRIAGE HAS BEEN DISSOLVED BECAUSE OF THE REASONS OF ABUSE, UNFAITHFULNESS, OR ABANDONMENT, ACCORDING TO THE TEACHINGS OF SCRIPTURE. A DECLARATION OF NULLITY IS NOT SAYING THE MARRIAGE DID NOT EXIST, BUT THAT THE MARRIAGE, WHICH WAS, HAS BEEN DECLARED NULL AND VOID. TO REQUEST A DECLARATION OF NULLITY, THE PRIEST, ON BEHALF OF THE DIVORCED PERSON, MAY REQUEST OF THE BISHOP USING THE FORM, A REQUEST FOR A DECLARATION OF NULLITY.\*

**11. MARRIAGE AS EVANGELISM.** OFTENTIMES, UNCHURCHED PEOPLE, UNBELIEVERS, AND THE SPIRITUALLY-COMPLACENT PRESENT THEMSELVES FOR CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE IN OUR CHURCHES. THE PREMARITAL COUNSELING SESSIONS AND THE CEREMONY ITSELF ARE GREAT TOOLS FOR EVANGELISM. GO FOR IT! BUT THIS DOESN'T MEAN YOU CAN COMPROMISE OUR STANDARDS OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE. HOLDING TO THE STANDARD CAN POINT THEM TO WHAT IS HOLY OR PRICK THEIR CONSCIENCE TO SOFTEN THEM TO THE GOSPEL.

**13. PASTORAL SITUATIONS.** AS A PRIEST YOU WILL ALWAYS FACE UNIQUE PASTORAL SITUATIONS, ESPECIALLY IN REGARD TO WEDDINGS. HOLD UP THE STANDARD, BUT RESPOND WITH PASTORAL CARE AND CONCERN. OUR CALLING IS TO SHEPHERD THE FLOCK, NOT "CLUB THEM" WITH THE LAW.

**14. WHEN IN DOUBT.** WHEN IN DOUBT, DON'T HESITATE TO CALL THE BISHOP OR THE CANON TO THE ORDINARY. WE ARE HERE TO BE OF ASSISTANCE TO YOU AND HELP YOU BE SUCCESSFUL IN YOUR MINISTRY. WE WILL OFFER WHAT COUNSEL WE CAN, BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, WE WILL PRAY WITH YOU.

*\* THIS FORM IS ATTACHED TO THIS CUSTOMARY, BUT WILL ALSO BE AVAILABLE ON-LINE THROUGH THE RESOURCE SECTION OF THE DIOCESAN WEBSITE.*

## **SECTION TWO – CANONS OF THE CHURCH**

### **CANONS OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA**

*THE FORM PRODUCED BELOW IS FROM THE ACNA VERSION. 3*

#### **TITLE TWO, CANON 7: OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE**

**Section 1** - The Anglican Church in North America affirms our Lord's teaching that the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony is in its nature a union permanent and lifelong of one man and one woman.

**Section 2** - It shall be within the discretion of any member of the Clergy to decline to solemnize any marriage.

**Section 3** - Members of the Clergy of this Church shall conform to the Canons of this Church governing the solemnization of Holy Matrimony.

1. Both parties shall be baptized. Any exception to this requires the permission of the Bishop;
2. There shall be thirty (30) days notice of intention to marry unless waived for weighty reasons, in which case the Bishop shall be notified immediately and in writing;
3. The Clergy shall provide counsel to both parties on Holy Matrimony with respect to theological and social implications and responsibilities;
4. The Clergy shall ascertain that the man and woman, parties to the marriage, have a valid marriage license.

**Section 4** - As marriage is a lifelong covenant between a man and a woman in which the two become one flesh, it is both an ordinance of Creation, affirmed as such by our Lord, and commended by Saint Paul as a sign of the mystical union between Christ and His Church (Matthew 19:3-9; Ephesians 5:22-32). Therefore, the failure of a marriage is always a tragedy. Scripture acknowledges our fallen nature and does provide guidance to know when a marriage may be declared a nullity or dissolved and allows the possibility of a subsequent marriage in certain circumstances (Matthew 19 and 1 Corinthians 7).

1. Couples who request to be married by a member of the Clergy of this Church must have approval from their Bishop if either party has ever been divorced;
2. When a divorced person seeks permission to remarry, the Clergy must ascertain the pertinent facts concerning a declaration of nullity or termination of marriage; and in the absence of a declaration of nullity, forward such information to the Bishop in writing for his godly advice and consent;
3. The Diocese is responsible to create a process by which this discernment may be made with reasonable promptness.

#### **Section 5 –**

1. No Clergy knowingly, after due inquiry, shall solemnize any marriage if they have unresolved concerns regarding the following impediments:

- (a) Consanguinity and affinity as defined in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer;
- (b) Mistaken identity;
- (c) Absence of the capacity for free and intelligent choice;
- (d) Bigamy, evidence of sexual perversion or conviction of a sexually related crime; 4
- (e) Fraud, coercion, abuse or duress.

2. Any declarations of nullity may only be granted by a Bishop with jurisdiction and shall be based upon Scriptural principles including the foregoing impediments to marriage.

**Section 6** - The Clergy shall require the parties to sign the following declaration:

*"We, A. B. and C. D., desiring to receive the blessing of Holy Matrimony in the Church, do solemnly declare that we hold marriage to be a lifelong union of husband and wife as it is set forth in the Book of Common Prayer. We believe it is for the purpose of the procreation (if it may be) of children, and their spiritual and physical nurture, for mutual fellowship, encouragement, and understanding, and for the safeguarding and benefit of society, and we do engage ourselves, so far as in us lies, to make our utmost effort to establish this relationship and to seek God's help thereto."*

**Section 7** - In all cases marriages shall be solemnized according to the forms contained in an authorized Book of Common Prayer, or other rite authorized by the Bishop.

**Section 8** - The Clergy shall record in the Parish register the name, age, and residence of each party. Such record shall be signed by the member of the Clergy, the married parties, and at least two witnesses.

## **TITLE TWO, CANON 8: OF STANDARDS OF SEXUAL MORALITY AND ETHICS**

**Section 1** - Clergy and lay leaders of this Church are called to be exemplary in all spheres of morality as a condition of being appointed or remaining in office.

**Section 2** - In view of the teaching of Holy Scripture, the Lambeth Conference of 1998 and the Jerusalem

Declaration, this Church upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union,

and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage, and cannot legitimize or bless same sex unions or ordain persons who engage in homosexual behavior. Sexual intercourse should

take place only between a man and a woman who are married to each other.

**Section 3** - God, and not man, is the creator of human life. The unjustified taking of life is sinful. Therefore, all members and clergy are called to promote and respect the sanctity of every human life from conception to natural death.

**Section 4** - The Church is called upon to show Christ-like compassion to those who have fallen into sin, encouraging them to repent and receive forgiveness, and offering the ministry of healing to all who suffer physically or emotionally as a result of such sin.

### **Section 5 - Concerning Upholding the Sanctity of Marriage Especially for Those to Be Ordained.**

Marriage as a lifelong covenant between a man and a woman, where the two become one flesh, is both an ordinance of Creation, affirmed as such by our Lord, and commended by Saint Paul as a sign of the mystical union between Christ and his Church (Matthew 19:3-9; Ephesians 5:22-32). As wholesome examples and patterns to the entire flock of Christ, all married persons to be admitted to Holy Orders shall remain married to

their spouse for life, and in accordance with the vows they exchanged in Holy Matrimony. Subject to Section 6 of this Canon, no person shall be admitted into Holy Orders who has divorced and remarried. 5

**Section 6 - Concerning Pastoral Exceptions to Section 5** The Archbishop of this Church, on an application made to him by the Bishop sponsoring a person who by reason of Section 5 of this Canon could not otherwise be admitted into Holy Orders may, upon a showing of good cause and particularly in light of the exceptions in Matthew 19 and 1 Corinthians 7, remove the impediment imposed by that section to the admission of the person into Holy Orders. Pastoral exceptions may be made in accordance with the directions given from time to time by the Archbishop acting in consultation with the College of Bishops.



## REQUEST FOR REMARRIAGE

*The Canons of our Province and Diocese require that the bishop must approve any marriage of a divorced person. It should be noted that a request to the bishop for remarriage is not just for permission for the priest to marry the couple, but for the couple to get married with the blessing of the Church. It is not whether or not they can get married. To nullify does not mean that the marriage did not exist as is the case in some traditions, but it means to declare that the marriage is dissolved because of unfaithfulness, abandonment, or abuse according to Scripture.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE OF WEDDING

\_\_\_\_\_  
GROOM'S NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
AGE

\_\_\_\_\_  
NUMBER OF MARRIAGE

\_\_\_\_\_  
BRIDE'S NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
AGE

\_\_\_\_\_  
NUMBER OF MARRIAGE

ARE BOTH BAPTIZED AND MEMBERS IN GOOD STANDING IN YOUR PARISH? \_\_\_\_\_

IF NOT, PLEASE EXPLAIN THE SITUATION \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE OF DIVORCE DECREE AND/OR NULLIFICATION \_\_\_\_\_

JUDGE OR OFFICIAL'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

REASON FOR THE DIVORCE \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
DESCRIBE WHY YOU AS THEIR PRIEST BELIEVE THIS COUPLE SHOULD HAVE THE BLESSING OF THE CHURCH TO REMARRY \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
DO YOU BELIEVE YOU ARE VIOLATING YOUR CONSCIENCE TO PERFORM THIS MARRIAGE? \_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
PRIEST'S NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
PRIEST'S SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
BISHOP'S APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL

\_\_\_\_\_  
BISHOP'S SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE



**REQUEST FOR THE BLESSING OF A CIVIL MARRIAGE OF DIVORCED PEOPLE**

*The Canons of our Province and Diocese require that the bishop must approve any marriage of a divorced person. In the case of divorced people asking a priest to “Bless” their Civil Marriage, the Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of CANA West will not consider granting permission for a priest to do the service unless one year has passed since they were married.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
GROOM’S NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
AGE

\_\_\_\_\_  
BRIDE’S NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
AGE

ARE BOTH BAPTIZED AND MEMBERS IN GOOD STANDING IN YOUR PARISH? \_\_\_\_

IF NOT, PLEASE EXPLAIN THE SITUATION \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF CIVIL MARRIAGE \_\_\_\_\_

JUDGE OR OFFICIAL'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DESCRIBE WHY YOU AS THEIR PRIEST BELIEVE THIS COUPLE SHOULD HAVE THE BLESSING OF THE CHURCH ON THEIR REMARRIAGE \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

DO YOU BELIEVE YOU ARE VIOLATING YOUR CONSCIENCE TO PERFORM THIS MINISTRY? \_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
PRIEST’S NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
PRIEST’S SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
BISHOP’S APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL

\_\_\_\_\_  
BISHOP’S SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE





PETITION FOR BISHOP'S CONSENT TO SOLEMNIZE A  
MARRIAGE AFTER DIVORCE OR ANNULMENT

This 4-page petition requires the signatures of a CANA West priest (at the bottom of Page 2), the intended man and woman (middle of Page 4), and the bishop of CANA West (at the bottom of Page 4).

The priest should retain a copy of the completed form while the original completed form shall be mailed to the bishop of CANA West.

The bishop must receive the petition, completed and signed, not less than 90 days prior to the planned wedding date. If the bishop grants his consent, the original form will be returned with his signature for the Parish files.

*Please print clearly.*

1. Date of petition \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_
2. CANA East priest's full name \_\_\_\_\_
3. E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_
4. Work phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone \_\_\_\_\_
5. CANA West congregation name \_\_\_\_\_
6. Mailing address of congregation \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Street or PO Box City ST Zip*

7. I, the above-named priest, submit this petition to the bishop of CANA West, for his consent to solemnize the marriage of the following man and woman:

8. Man's full name and marital status \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
*First Middle Last Suffix*

Never married  Widowed  Divorced  Prior marriage annulled

9. Woman's full name and marital status \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
*First Middle Last Suffix*

Never married  Widowed  Divorced  Prior marriage annulled

*Check Yes or No for each of the following questions.*

*Attach a full explanation for each "No" response.*

**SURVEY TO BE COMPLETED BY CANA West PRIEST (YES or NO)**

10. At least 365 days have elapsed since the date(s) of the final decree(s) of divorce/annulment.

11. The planned wedding date is at least 90 days away.

12. I have met in person with this couple.

13. If either this man or this woman has had two or more marriages dissolve (by divorce and/or annulment), then I have received a report from a psychiatrist or licensed professional counselor, which satisfies any substantive concerns I may have. Forward the form the Bishop's Office- Venerable Dr. Myles Calvin for Review.

14. Are both individuals baptized?

15. I believe this couple intends a Christian marriage according to the

canons of this church.

16. I am satisfied that this couple intends to live out their marriage with the support of a Christian congregation.

17. I believe the marriage of this couple will be a demonstrable sign of the spiritual union between Christ and his Church.

18. This couple has completed or will complete a program of pre-marital counseling satisfactory to me.

19. I am satisfied that this man and this woman have realistically faced and evaluated the causes that resulted in the dissolution of prior marriages.

20. I am satisfied that this man and this woman have the adequate consideration for prior spouses and any dependents.

21. I am satisfied that this couple has the ability to handle any personal differences (e.g., regarding ethnicity, religious discipline, age, income, patterns of conflict) in a biblical and healthy manner.

22. I am satisfied that this couple has the ability to handle any differences regarding surviving dependents (e.g., disposition of assets, property, and other estate planning) in a biblical and healthy manner.

23. I am either the senior ranking clergy person of this congregation OR I have obtained approval to officiate at this wedding.

24. If the couple has requested other clergy to officiate at their wedding, I have contacted said clergy.

25. I am willing to officiate at this wedding, if consent is granted.

26. I have examined the final decree(s) of divorce/annulment and find the prior marriage(s) lawfully dissolved. Please send the Final decrees to the Diocesan Office.

27. All matters of property and custody related to the previous marriage(s) have been settled.

---

28. *Signature of CANA West priest*

If any of the answers to the above questions are “no,” please explain the reasons in the box below or attach a full statement on a separate sheet of paper.

Please attach a statement, or write a summary below, describing details of previous marriages and the causes for divorce or annulment.

## DECLARATION OF INTENT

We, desiring to receive the blessing of Holy Matrimony in the Church, do solemnly declare that we hold marriage to be a lifelong union of husband and wife as it is set forth in The Holy Bible, The Book of Common Prayer [1662] and in the canons of this diocese [CANA West]. We believe that the union of husband and wife—in heart, body, and mind—is intended by God for their mutual joy, for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity, and when it is God’s will for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We do commit and engage ourselves to establish this relationship according to God’s Holy Word and therefore ask God to be our helper.

---

*29. Man’s signature*

---

*30. Woman’s signature*

Clergy, mail the original completed four-page petition to your CANA bishop.  
When returned with bishop’s signature, keep a copy in your parish records.  
Missionary Diocese of CANA West  
The Rt. Rev’d Dr. Felix Orji  
470 Eagle Drive  
El Paso, Texas, 79912

# BISHOP'S CONSENT

Date of bishop's consent \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
*MM DD YYYY*

---

*Bishop's name printed*

---

*Bishop's signature*

Return the original document with bishop's signature to the parish office requesting consent.  
Send to the CANA West Office for Bishop's Approval.  
470 Eagle Drive  
El Paso, Texas, 79912