



### About this Guide

A written petition (Summary Statement) is presented by the person wishing to initiate an examination of their marriage for possible invalidity.

Keep in mind that a marriage depends on the consent both parties gave to marriage. Thus, the cause of invalidity had to be present at the time of the wedding.

This guide assists you in recalling significant details of your courtship and marriage.

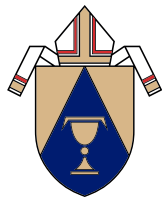
Use the questions as a prompt to give us a good idea of your relational issues. A summary of one to three pages is normally sufficient.

### Marriage law states that marriage is brought about by:

- (a) the consent of the parties,
- (b) legitimately manifested, and
- (c) by those qualified according to law

If it can be proven that the consent was defective at the time of exchange of vows, on the part of one or both parties, then marriage was not brought about.

# A GUIDE TO WRITING YOUR SUMMARY



**The Tribunal  
Diocese of Sacramento**  
2110 Broadway  
Sacramento, CA 95818

Phone: (916) 733-0225  
Fax: (916) 733-0224  
tribunaldept@scd.org  
www.scd.org/tribunal

Salus Animarum Suprema Lex  
*"The salvation of souls is the supreme law."*



*The Tribunal of the Diocese of Sacramento*

*As you compose your summary, consider the following. Ask your parish advocate for help.*

### **Your Background**

A history of your background combined with details of the courtship reveal the circumstances, influences, and experiences which shaped your choice of a marriage partner.

- What was the quality of your family life and growing up years?
- Were there any significant or problematic circumstances or events that may have negatively impacted you or your choices later in life?
- As a result of your upbringing, do you think you really knew what family life was all about?
- When you met your former spouse, were you in school? Living at home? Working? Self-sufficient?
- What plans did you have for your life?

### **Courtship Period**

Courtship lays a foundation for marriage in that it allows a couple to develop many of the virtues and skills that they will need for a good marriage: self-discipline, self-sacrificing, patience, right judgment, discernment, open communication, trust, fortitude, perseverance, maturity, faith, hope, and love (to name a few).

Briefly describe your courtship. Consider the following and please give concrete examples.

- How did you meet your former spouse?
- How did you move from acquaintance to friendship to courtship?
- Was there romance?
- What qualities attracted you to your former spouse?
- Were you intimate? How soon? Was this important to the both of you?
- What was the quality of your relationship?
- Were you ever disillusioned?
- Was there conflict in the relationship?
- Were your family and friends supportive of your relationship?



### **Engagement Period**

Engagement is a period that signifies the commitment and devotion between two people who wish to spend the rest of their lives with one another. Reflect on your engagement.

Briefly describe. Was it a time of joy, stress, doubt? Did concerns surface? What were they? Did they negatively affect your relationship? Did you think you could overcome them? Was the engagement a time of preparation?

### **The Wedding**

- Did you have any serious doubts about going through with the wedding? Why?
- Describe the wedding day.
- Did you have a honeymoon, and were there any problems, frustrations, or disturbing discoveries on the honeymoon?

### **Breakdown of Marriage**

- When did you first become aware of the problem/s in the marriage?
- What was the nature of the problem/s?

### **The Final Separation**

- What precipitated the final separation?
- Were there any attempts at reconciliation?

### **Pay attention to problematic events or behaviors and include if applicable:**

- Felt pressure to marry
- Pre-marital pregnancy
- Prenuptial agreement
- Placed a condition to marriage
- Married to obtain legal status
- Not open to children
- Pattern of infidelity before marriage and after
- Experience of a chaotic childhood of instability, poverty, emotional neglect
- Experience of abuse: sexual, verbal, or physical
- Family tragedy in family of origin
- Alcoholic parents
- Alcoholism
- Drug abuse
- History of chronic or mental illness
- Divorced parents / Step-parents
- Addictive behavior
- Low self esteem
- Disciplinary problems in childhood or adolescence