



EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF PENNSYLVANIA

240 South Fourth Street • Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106
(215) 627-6434 • Fax: (215) 627-7550 • www.diopa.org rodneym@diopa.org

The Rt. Rev. Rodney R. Michel
Assisting Bishop

TO: The Clergy of the Diocese of Pennsylvania
RE: Marriage Canons -- Title I, Canons 18 and 19

Dear Friends:

As has been the policy in the past, I hope you will study these two National Church Canons pertaining to Holy Matrimony carefully. Here are the procedures we will follow in the Diocese of Pennsylvania. First, the orientation of these Canons is pastoral, and the pastoral ministry of the clergy is paramount. Every marriage is an opportunity for teaching the Faith, for evangelism, and for lasting incorporation in the redeeming and supportive community of faith. For persons seeking marriage in the Episcopal Church, a series of reflective periods of instruction, and participation for the couple in the life of the Church is assumed.

With regard to Canon 19, the letter from the priest giving her/his evaluation of and judgment upon the pastoral situation will be the most important guide to me in making any canonically required response. Because I may want to confer with the Diocesan Chancellor or other legal and pastoral advisors, your application must be received in the Bishop's Office 30 days before a response is expected. No date for a subsequent wedding should be published until consent has been given.

Second, because a divorce decree in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania may be appealed by either party within 30 days following the issuance of the final decree, we cannot pass on the validity of a divorce until the decree has been in effect for at least 30 days.

Third, if a priest other than the clergy person in charge of the congregation in which the marriage is planned submits the application, it is necessary that we be informed of where the marriage is to be solemnized, where it is to be registered, and most important, that the clergy person in charge of the congregation involved has been fully informed and is in agreement with the proposed actions.

If you have any questions, Jakki Wallace in this office will be glad to assist you.


Please be sure that the following documents accompany the application for judgment.

1. A letter from the priest through whom the application is being submitted, giving a brief history of the couple, the degree to which they understand and accept responsibility for the failure of any previous marriage, the extent of their involvement in parish life and worship and the priest's estimate of their potential for a lifelong union.
2. A completed Canon 19 application (Parts I, II, and III). If both parties are divorced each one must complete a Part II
3. A copy of the divorce decree(s), certified no less than 30 days after the divorce.
4. Full information about the proposed date and location of the ceremony and notification of the clergy person in charge of the congregation involved if the priest making the recommendation is not that person.

Please note: Canon 19§3(c) requires that, once consent is granted, the solemnization of any marriage carried out under this Section is to be reported to the Bishop.

If neither party is a member of the Episcopal Church, the couple should be encouraged to seek a clergy person in a community of faith in which they will participate and find future support.

Sincerely,



The Rt. Rev. Rodney R. Michel,
Assisting Bishop