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RETURNED TO PEACE

The Spiritual Benefits of Annulment

Tom and Desirée Marciani



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Published by Liguori Publications
Liguori, Missouri 63057

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p ISBN 978-0-7648-2578-1
e ISBN 978-0-7648-7030-9

Liguori Publications, a nonprofit corporation, is an apostolate of the Redemptorists. To learn more about the Redemptorists, visit Redemptorists.com.

Printed in the United States of America
19 18 17 16 15 / 5 4 3 2 1
First Edition

Introduction

For more than ten years I have been working with the divorced in our Church community. Their hurt, pain, concerns, frustrations, and hopes are very real to me. For that reason I offer annulment seminars in hopes of removing one more fear from their lives about what the annulment process entails.

During the seminars, it becomes evident what the motivating factors are for people attending. Some want to make peace with God, some make peace with the Church, some make peace with themselves and their former spouse, and for many to get a Decree of Nullity so they are free to remarry within the Catholic Church and begin a new life. But there is so much more to be gained from the process than what may initially motivate people to pursue and petition for an annulment.

I hope readers may also benefit from what Desirée and Tom have so willingly chosen to share about themselves. I pray that the annulment process and their sharing may be the grace people need to investigate the process as a means of further reflection and growth in awareness of God.

FR. PETER SCHAVITZ, CSSR

A note on this new edition

The pamphlet you are about to read will share insights from my husband, Deacon Tom Marciani, and myself about the ways the annulment process helped us heal.

In addition to our stories, we offer practical advice on how to know if you need an annulment, how to begin the process, and where to find annulment resources. You can learn where to find these resources at the end of this pamphlet.

DESIRÉE MARCIANI
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
OF THE OFFICE OF FAMILY MINISTRY
OF THE DIOCESE OF JOLIET

Desirée's Story

Andy (not his real name) and Desirée met in high school. They began dating after college when both had full-time jobs and eventually married. Their marriage was blessed with two wonderful children but ended in divorce nineteen years later. Six years after the divorce and a year after dating Tom, she began the annulment process. In 1998, after eight years as a single parent Desirée and Tom married in the Catholic Church.

The blessings I received from the annulment process are many. At a time when I thought I knew myself thoroughly, I was amazed at my discoveries. Despite undergoing many life-changing and devastating events and reflecting on them for decades, the annulment process taught me significant things about myself, even

before the formal process began. How?
I'll explain.

Why I Started the Process

Like most Catholics, I did not know much about the process. Frankly, it scared me to death. And I bought into some of the myths believed about the process, like the horror of my children being considered illegitimate. For years, close relatives would strongly urge me to go through the process, but I continued to resist. I didn't want my divorce. Why then would I want an annulment? Years later, when my present husband Tom and I started to think about marriage, I started to ponder on the spiritual essentials of my life, like prayer, worship, Eucharist, and reconciliation and how I could not spiritually survive without them. I became increasingly aware of how meaningful, beautiful, cleansing, and necessary the sacraments of Eucharist and reconciliation are, and the thought of

possibly being without them was and is too much for me to bear. These were my lifelines and connected me to my source of unconditional love. They were such an essential part of me, and the contemplation of the pros and cons of the annulment process showed beyond a doubt that I was not willing to give them up. So the process began, and little did I realize that many more benefits were to come.

My Family of Origin

Although I had been divorced for many years before beginning the annulment process, it still proved to be an extremely painful but significant healing process for me. It became an insightful spreadsheet of my life before and during my first marriage. Indeed, I had already learned important insights from counseling, research, and support groups, but the annulment process had a way of tying it all together, completing it and bringing