

Requirements for submitting Paperwork for the Restoration of Someone to the Sacramental Life of the Church.

Please follow the following guidelines when submitting your request for someone to be restored to the sacramental life of the Church.

1. First and foremost, after a person is divorced he or she is separated from the sacraments for a period of time *including Holy Communion*. The person may still confess and be absolved for other sins, but must refrain from being absolved for the divorce and from receiving Holy Communion until the person has been restored in writing by the Metropolitan *in all cases*. **This is not a matter for pastoral discretion.**

2. The priest, under all circumstances, needs to wait at least six months from the date of the final civil divorce decree before writing for restoration. Hopefully, if the penitent is an active member of the Church, then he/she has already been meeting with the priest and may have already been refraining from Holy Communion prior to the legal ending of the marriage. It is very important that the pastor have frequent meetings with the divorced person during this time in order to be certain that his/her repentance is sincere. Nevertheless, even if the person has not been receiving the sacraments for a period six months or longer prior to the final judgment of divorce by the civil authorities, this minimal six month period is still in effect starting from the date of the civil divorce decree.

NOTE: A parishioner who has been divorced must not participate in any sacrament of the church (except Confession), especially Holy Communion, nor should they serve in any official capacity for the church, especially as a parish council member, until such time as the Metropolitan grants him/her in writing full restoration to the sacramental life of the Church.

3. When submitting the paperwork, please include the following:

- a. A copy of the official final decree of divorce from the civil authorities.
- b. Your recommendation in an official letter addressed to His Eminence, Metropolitan JOSEPH. This letter should state clearly the reason the penitent was divorced and the circumstances surrounding the divorce in a concise, but thorough way. In addition, the divorced person must submit his/her own written statement to the Metropolitan and this must be included with the pastor's request. In all cases, the religion of the petitioners must be given. If one of the parties is not Orthodox you must specify his/her religion and include his/her baptismal certificate. The Christian denomination that issued the baptismal certificate must baptize with water in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and must proclaim a traditional affirmation of the dogma of the Holy Trinity. Please refer to the most recent edition of the Archdiocesan Publication entitled "The Service for the

Chrismation of Converts into the Orthodox Faith” if you have any doubt about a particular denomination.

c. You must use the following sentence as the last part of the letter if, indeed, you recommend that the penitent be restored. “I hereby recommend based on thorough examination, that (name) be restored to the sacramental life of the Church.”

d. The pastor must never agree to a specific date for the marriage until he first receives the written approval from the Metropolitan.

e. A \$200.00 filing fee (made payable to the Antiochian Archdiocese) for each divorced person. For example, if a couple comes to you to get married and both were previously married and neither had been restored to the sacramental life of the Church, then \$400.00 must be sent. Please note, even if the person is not Orthodox or was previously married before becoming Orthodox or any other circumstance, he or she is still requesting to be married, as a divorced person, in the Orthodox Church. As such, a review of the circumstances and verification that he or she is truly divorced is necessary. In such a case, we are not restoring a person to the sacraments, but allowing a divorced person, albeit a Christian who is not Orthodox, to be married in the Orthodox Church after examining the facts of his or her divorce. In such cases, you can modify your “recommendation” to say “to be allowed to marry in the Holy Orthodox Church” rather than “to be restored to the sacramental life of the Church.” Please note the following two special circumstances:

1. An Orthodox person has received a letter from another Orthodox jurisdiction which specifically states that they have been restored to the sacramental life of the Church after a divorce. In this case, you must first write to the Metropolitan, include a copy of this restoral letter, and ask that it be accepted as presented. If the Metropolitan accepts the restoral letter as presented, you will receive written confirmation and no further action is necessary. If for some reason the restoral letter cannot be accepted, you will receive written instructions as to the next steps.
2. An Orthodox person has received a letter from another Orthodox jurisdiction which grants them an Ecclesiastical Divorce. In this case, you must include this letter with your request to the Metropolitan that they be granted an Orthodox marriage.

f. If the penitent is planning to marry overseas or in another Orthodox jurisdiction, our letter of restoration may have to be worded differently. In such cases, please state such in your letter or consult with the archdiocese if you have questions.

4. Please be reminded that when both parities have been previously married that the “Office of a Second Marriage” be used.

5. Please be reminded that in order for an Orthodox marriage to be conducted, one of the parties must be an Orthodox Christian, and the other party must be a Christian who has presented a valid baptismal certificate. It is never acceptable to marry an Orthodox Christian to a non-Christian.

6. Please be reminded that the Sacrament of Marriage must be conducted in the Orthodox church building unless a very special circumstance exists. (for example a mission renting a small space). Any request to hold a wedding in an alternate venue must be submitted to the Metropolitan and written permission must be obtained from the Metropolitan.

7. Please be reminded that written permission must be obtained for any request of a wedding during a fasting period or other periods in which weddings are prohibited, including a Wednesday or Friday. With that in mind, be aware that absolutely no requests will be considered for weddings during the Great Fast or the Dormition Fast under any circumstances. Please consult the Clergy Guide which specifies the acceptable time periods for celebrating a marriage.