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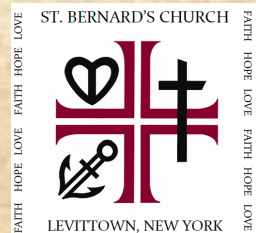
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Rev. John McCarthy, Pastor

Making Your Marriage Catholic

For couples already civilly married



*“What God has joined together,
let no one divide.”*

**St. Bernard's Church
Levittown, New York**

If you are a Catholic who is civilly married but not married in the Catholic Church...

St. Bernard's parish celebrates your commitment to each other through a civil marriage! You and your spouse have made a public commitment to each other; we now invite you to consider taking the next step to strengthen that partnership.



What is "convalidation?"

At least one of you is Catholic. As such, you may or may not be aware that in the Catholic Church, we celebrate the beginning of marriage with a joyous solemn ceremony at which the husband and wife promise before God, the Church's minister, and at least two witnesses that they are freely committing themselves to a stable, permanent partnership of life and love that is unbreakable. In doing this, they are explicitly inviting God into their marriage to strengthen and support it. God is present in the marriage through the gift of grace, and it's because of this that the Church considers this kind of marriage commitment a *sacrament*. This means that the couple, by committing to a deep, God-centered relationship, promise to become signs of God's presence to each other, to their family, and to the world. When a couple chooses to do this *after* they have already married civilly, it is called a "convalidation."

(Please note that in cases where one of you was previously validly married, a Church annulment is required before convalidation. Our parish can help with this.)



Why should you do this?

A convalidation shouldn't be done lightly. It's appropriate to do when a couple feels that a desired spiritual dimension is missing in their marriage, and they are ready to make a new act of consent that is deeper and more God-centered than their original vows. By doing this, the couple—and any children they may have—enter into a new kind of relationship with one another, with the Church, and with Jesus Christ.



What happens at a convalidation?

After some initial conversation and preparation at the parish, a convalidation Mass or ceremony will be scheduled at a mutually-convenient time. The ceremony may be as simple or as elaborate as you like; all that is required is your presence and the presence of two witnesses. (However, you can invite whoever you like!) If you wish to, you can help plan the ceremony in which you will exchange vows that express the Church's understanding of what a sacramental marriage relationship is. Your act of consent will be received and blessed by the Church, and your marriage will now be considered a valid Catholic marriage.

Take that next step in your marriage...

Talk to each other and see if you're ready to take the next step. If you have children or grandchildren who are being initiated into the Church through Baptism, Holy Communion, or Confirmation, this is a good step to take so that the family's commitment to Christ through the Church is consistent. But most important, you'll be amazed at the strength and support that God will lend to your marriage if you just invite God in, talk about your joys and struggles as a couple and as a family, and ask God for direction and help. Bonus: by joining the St. Bernard's community in worship, service, and other activities, you will experience how God's love, grace and support can be communicated to you through the Church, which is Jesus' community of faith, hope and love!

Ready?

Need more information?

See back page for contact information.

