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## **IMPORTANT NOTICE TO ALL PRIESTS AND DEACONS CONCERNING MARRIAGES**

Please review the following norms concerning marriages. It is necessary, in every case, to contact the Chancery Office before booking a marriage if either party has been previously married in a civil or religious ceremony. The only exception is that of a previously married widow or widower.

- I. When a couple wishes to marry it is necessary to enquire immediately, at the time of the first contact with them, if either one has ever previously contracted a religious or civil marriage.
- II. If one was ever married before, in a civil or religious ceremony, it is necessary to immediately advise this person that he or she must contact the Chancery Office.
- III. It must be made clear to the parties that you can not set a date for the wedding until approval has been received from the Chancery. Please do not indicate what you think of their status, or if you think it will be easily resolved. Also, do not do a prenuptial investigation until they are authorized to see you again. This requirement applies to all previous marriages.
- IV. A non-Catholic who has had a previous marriage and now wishes to marry a Catholic may not be free to marry. The presumption is that a prior marriage is valid until proven otherwise. A person who has obtained a decree of freedom from a Civil Tribunal is included in this category. Even a person who has obtained a decree of freedom from an Ecclesiastical Tribunal must contact the Chancery before marriage plans can be initiated at a parish.
- V. **Please remember: The marriage of two non-Catholics is presumed VALID by the Roman Catholic Church until judged otherwise by a Catholic Ecclesiastical Tribunal. It does not matter if the marriage was a civil or religious union or if they are baptized or not.**

**The Chancery**