

Eparchial Tribunal

COVER LETTER WITH PETITIONER'S PRELIMINARY QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Petitioner:

Please answer the **PETITIONER'S PRELIMINARY QUESTIONNAIRE** your priest/deacon is giving you today as well as you possibly can. You may need additional stationery. Please give as "**many details**" as you can recall. You are also asked to please read and sign the attached two (2) documents you are also receiving:

- 1) the "**Tribunal Practices and Policies**" form,
- 2) the **Petition - Mandate** page listing the Reverend Elias Sleiman, M.L.M., Associate of Our Lady of Mt. Lebanon Church, as your Advocate and your Procurator.

In accordance with norms of the **Code of Canon Law for the Eastern Catholic Churches** and also of the **Code of Canon Law for the Latin Catholic Church**, the Respondent has the right to know that this marriage has been challenged in the Church Tribunal, namely, that something was possibly wrong with this marriage from its inception according to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Thus, a letter will be sent to the Respondent by this Tribunal informing him/her of your Petition. It is a good idea, if you are good terms, to inform your former spouse (the Respondent) what you are doing and that he/she will be receiving a letter from the Tribunal.

Please remember that the ultimate responsibility for proving your case rests with you. It is your responsibility to supply witnesses, and to make sure your witnesses are present when cited. Family members and very close friends make the best witnesses.

The more effort you put into preparing your case and the quicker you gather all the documents needed, the sooner your case can be resolved. Also, the better you inform the Respondent about everything, the fewer problems your case may ultimately have to face.

The Codes of Canon Law for both the Latin Catholic Church and for the Eastern Catholic Churches necessitate the notifying of the Petitioner and the Respondent at certain times during the Process. Each of these notifications also includes a time period allowing for a response. The time periods and process are as follows:

Petition:	Initial Letter Sent to Respondent - 30 days to respond.
Setting Grounds:	15 days before date for setting the Grounds of the Case (Joinder of Issues).
Notification of Grounds:	10 days for both Parties to appeal Grounds.
Publication of Acts:	15 days for both Parties to come to the Tribunal Office to review what testimony is in Acts, if either party desires.
Advocate:	30 days for each Advocate to write Brief.
Defender of Bond:	30 days for Defender of Sacrament of Marriage to write Animadversions.
Judge:	30 days to decide and write Sentence.
Notification of Decision:	Both the Petitioner & the Respondent must be Notified of the Decision. Each has 15 days to lodge an objection to the Decision. If Decision is Affirmative, each Party has 15 days to lodge an Appeal against it. If Decision is Negative (not proven), each Party has 15 days to lodge an Appeal against that Decision.
Send to Appellate Tribunal:	If No Appeal is filed, Sentence and Animadversions are sent to the Appellate Tribunal 30 days after notification has been sent to the Parties.
Appellate Tribunal:	30 days to confirm the Affirmative Decision, or to ask for the Acts of the Case, or to remand the Case back to First Instance.
New-marriage is possible:	After two Affirmative Decisions even if appealed to the Holy See

We try our best to move each case along as best as we can, as the Parties involved deserve as just and as swift a decision as can possibly be done within the limits of the law. The Tribunal Officers

usually do not need the time allowed by the Canons. However, the time periods for Notifications cannot be shortened for reasons of justice and fairness to all.

We are here to help, and to bring healing and hope. We need your patience and your help. Without witnesses, there is no case. Please try your best to be ready when you are cited, and have your witnesses ready when they are cited.

If you or any of your witnesses **cannot be present** when cited for Formal Depositions, please notify this Tribunal Office at once. As regards a witness who cannot be present, hopefully another witness can be cited at the last minute to replace the witness who cannot appear at the time cited. Failure to notify this Tribunal regarding anyone not being able to be present to testify, only adds unnecessary delays to this Tribunal being able to give you an answer as “speedily” and as “justly” as possible.

CCEO Canon 1377 reminds us that in all marriage cases, the moral and civil obligations which the Parties may have to each other and also to their children as regards the support and education must be fulfilled. Thus, child support and/or alimony must be paid in full and must be paid up to date. **Visitation rights** must be fulfilled, and being a **parent of care and love** to any child(ren) must also be evidenced.

Cost for the Tribunal work so that adequate staff can be paid and expenses can be covered is currently: **\$600.00** for each Petition submitted. In case of hardship, the local parish may be able to help with some of the expenses.

Thank you for your cooperation. The Tribunal is here for you and will do all it can, but it needs your fullest cooperation and help. This is **your Petition, so please make every effort to assist the Tribunal, when it seeks your help, to serve you and the cause of justice.**

Chor-Bishop William J. Leser
Judicial Vicar

Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon Tribunal
333 South San Vicente Boulevard
Los Angeles, California 90048
Phone: (310) 275 - 6634
Fax: (310) 858 - 0856