Diocese of Allentown

Prenuptial Inquiry
The Prenuptial Inquiry is one of the pastoral tools available to the clergy to help couples grow in holiness and prepare for the duties of their new state in life (cf. Canon 1063, n.2). The use of this Prenuptial Inquiry fulfills the requirements of Canons 1066 and 1067. This instrument should be used in conjunction with the policies found in The Priest's Handbook for Pastoral Marriage Preparation and the Complimentary Legislation promulgated for the Latin Rite Dioceses of the United States of America on 1 December 2000.

To assist the clergy in fruitfully using this Prenuptial Inquiry, the following observations are made to clarify certain aspects of the document:

1. Baptismal Certificates are to be dated within six months of their presentation and must possess the parish seal. It is most important that any Baptismal Register notations be listed on the reverse side of the Certificate. If there are no notations in the Register, the priest is to write “no notations” on the back with his initials.

2. Any person previously married must present an ecclesiastical Decree of Nullity or a Death Certificate.

3. Any required dispensations/permissions should be obtained in due time from the proper Chancery.

4. In the Case of a previous marriage dissolved by death, the priest/deacon should prudently investigate the circumstances of the spouse’s death with due regard for Canon 1090.

5. The term, practicing Catholic, is to be understood as a member of the faithful who lives in accord with the Precepts of the Church (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church §2042.)

6. The term, notoriously rejected the Catholic faith, is to be applied to anyone who professes that he or she is no longer a Catholic, refuses obedience to the Church and its laws, and is openly hostile to it. This term is not to be applied to those who passively do not practice their faith nor to those who have abandoned their faith without positively rejecting it. In the latter case, for pastoral reasons, the priest/deacon should nonetheless examine the person’s suitability to marry for pastoral reasons.

7. The term, Common Law Marriage, is used to define a stable union between a man and a woman. It occurs when a man and a woman are publicly known as husband and wife and/or share legal rights and responsibilities under civil law. Civil law criteria varies from state to state. This union may give rise to the impediment of public propriety (cf. Canon 1093). By statute in Pennsylvania, no Common Law Marriage contracted after 1 January 2005 will be deemed valid under civil law. However, any Common Law Marriage entered into prior to that date will continue to be recognized as valid under Pennsylvania law.

(Clergy Instructions revised 15 October 2007)