



**THE M-A FORM:
THE PRENUPTIAL
INVESTIGATION (cont.)**

This month, we conclude our look at the M-A form, also known as the Prenuptial Investigation. It is beyond the scope of this brief newsletter to address every question on the form, but we will look at some of the questions that may require an explanation.

Declaration and Promise by the Catholic Party – Due to the danger that mixed or interfaith marriages can pose to the Catholic party's practice of the faith and that of any children born to the couple, marriages between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic require the permission of the local ordinary, and marriages between a Catholic and a non-baptized person require a dispensation. Canon 1125 requires that, before the local ordinary grants the needed permission or dispensation, the Catholic party declare that he or she is prepared to remove dangers of defecting from the faith and promise to do all in his or her power to bring up children from the union in the Catholic faith.

The law also requires that the non-Catholic party be informed about this declaration and promise, since raising their children is the responsibility and the privilege of both parties. This declaration is to be made for all mixed or interfaith marriages, even for couples beyond childbearing age, as the danger to the faith of the Catholic party can be present regardless of the possibility of children.

Request for Permission/Dispensation – The section of the M-A form requesting any needed permission or dispensation should be completed in full by the pastoral minister preparing the couple for marriage, with the exception that the Diocese of Erie no longer charges a fee for these services. Of course, voluntary donations in support of our work are always appreciated.

Permission for a mixed marriage must be requested for marriages between a Catholic and a baptized non-Catholic. A dispensation from the impediment of disparity of worship must be requested for marriages between a Catholic and a non-baptized person. Permission for a mixed marriage and for precaution a dispensation from disparity of worship should be requested when the baptismal status of the non-Catholic party cannot

be determined with certainty. A dispensation from the requirement of canonical form must be requested when a Catholic is marrying a non-Catholic outside of canonical form, that is, in a non-Catholic ceremony. The dispensation from the publication of banns is no longer required. The current Code of Canon Law gives the authority to bishops' conferences to issue norms regarding marriage banns, and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has chosen not to do so, so the dispensation need not be requested.

To complete the request for permission or a dispensation, the canonical reason for the request must be included. This depends on the parties and their situation, but the good of the spouses or to ensure a valid marriage in the Church are common. The pastoral minister preparing the couple should then sign the request, confirming that the requirements of canon 1125 have been observed.

That's it for the M-A form. Until next time, keep the faith, love God's people, and always honor the code!

