

What does the Church teach about Divorced Catholics and receiving Holy Communion?

Answer: The Catholic Church teaches that divorced Catholics who have not remarried or are living chastely after a divorce and are practicing the faith with regular confessions are welcome to receive Holy Communion. However, if a divorced Catholic has remarried without obtaining an annulment (a declaration from the Church that the first marriage was not valid), they are not permitted to receive Holy Communion because they are not living in full communion with Jesus and His Catholic Church.

The Church encourages all divorced and remarried Catholics to stay engaged in the life of the Church, attend Mass, and seek spiritual guidance, even if they cannot receive the Eucharist. Seeking an annulment or living according to Church teachings can open the door to full sacramental participation.

It is very important that Catholics in these situations speak to their priests or deacons to help them with the annulment process and to continue to strive towards full communion. Although it can take about 1-2 years for the annulment process, the diocese of Allentown only asks for you to offset the costs of the process by offering \$300 if you are able. So money should not keep you from trying and know that we your priests and deacons are here to walk with you in the process!

Catechism of the Catholic Church: The fidelity of conjugal love

1650

Today there are numerous Catholics in many countries who have recourse to civil divorce and contract new civil unions. In fidelity to the words of Jesus Christ — “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery” **160** the Church maintains that a new union cannot be recognized as valid, if the first marriage was. If the divorced are remarried civilly, they find themselves in a situation that objectively contravenes God’s law. Consequently, they cannot receive Eucharistic communion as long as this situation persists. For the same reason, they cannot exercise certain ecclesial responsibilities. Reconciliation through the sacrament of Penance can be granted only to those who have repented for having violated the sign of the covenant and of fidelity to Christ, and who are committed to living in complete continence.

1651

Toward Christians who live in this situation, and who often keep the faith and desire to bring up their children in a Christian manner, priests and the whole community must manifest an attentive solicitude, so that they do not consider themselves separated from the Church, in whose life they can and must participate as baptized persons:

They should be encouraged to listen to the Word of God, to attend the Sacrifice of the Mass, to persevere in prayer, to contribute to works of charity and to community efforts for justice, to bring up their children in the Christian faith, to cultivate the spirit and practice of penance and thus implore, day by day, God’s grace. **161**