

# THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE DIOCESE OF NEW JERSEY

## GUIDELINES FOR THE COUNSELING PRIEST

On page 4 of the application for consent, or in an accompanying confidential letter, **the priest counseling with the couple is asked to make his/her own judgment** of the **request for remarriage**. Please include along with any other pertinent information the following:

- a. Confirmation that you have seen each court decree of divorce or annulment involved.

(If there are two or more divorce or annulment decrees for either party, all the decrees need to be seen by the priest and noted on the application.)

- b. Period of time you have known the parties.
- c. The number of times you have counseled with them.
- d. Your sense that the conditions of Title 1, Canon 18, Section 2 have been met.
- e. Your affirmation of sections D, E, F and G on the application.
- f. The reasons for your personal judgment.
- g. Your willingness to officiate at the marriage upon the granting of consent by the Bishop.

Note: While pages 1 and 2 of the application by the parties seeking remarriage will be maintained on file in the Bishop's Office, page 3 and the accompanying letter by the priest (which may be on page 4) will be destroyed as soon as the Bishop renders his decision.

A letter giving the decision will be sent to the endorsing priest and to each party. With each favorable consent, an accompanying form in fulfillment of Canon 19, Section 3(c) will also be sent to the priest to be filled out and returned to the Bishop's Office at the time the marriage takes place.

Since the judgment/consent process is a collegial one, the priest should consult with the Bishop by telephone at any stage at which s/he senses the need.

Where there is more than one previous marriage for either party, the Bishop requests a consultation with the priest by telephone.

It is hoped that each counseling priest will present the canon respecting remarriage within the Episcopal Church as an expression of the Church's concern for the couple, for the whole community of faith, and for society at large. The precise moment for bringing the canon into the counseling process depends upon the priest's sense of timing and personal counseling style. It is hoped that the issues raised on page 3 are a normal part of the counseling process. The issues should first be addressed within that process. The statements which are ultimately written should simply be summaries of where the discussions led. It is appropriate for the counseling priest, when the couple desire it, to assist in formulating those statements. The act of "putting it down in writing" can in itself be a useful one for ascertaining agreement and crystallizing thought.