The Grandfather Priest

“It’s not unusual for older men to be ordained as Roman Catholic priests today. Vocations are burgeoning among mature men who are widowers or who never married at all.

At 65, Lloyd Bordelon fits the profile of the second career priest. But his past marital circumstances are a bit out of the ordinary, certainly for the Diocese of Lafayette.

Bordelon’s 24-year marriage ended in divorce in 1978. Six years later he was granted an annulment by the Diocese of Lafayette through procedures established under Roman Catholic Canon Law. That allowed the father of two and grandfather of three to enter Sacred Heart Seminary in Hail’s Corner, Wisc., in 1986. He will be ordained a priest later this month at St. John’s Cathedral in Lafayette.

Bordelon will be the first priest in this diocese to receive the sacrament of the priesthood following an annulment of a marriage, according to vicar-general Msgr. A.O. Sigur.

Bordelon is a native of Eunice and lived in Patterson for a number of years. He was an employee of Halliburton Services. He was also involved in the insurance and real estate business.

Bordelon says the biggest problem he faced after entering the seminary was the study of philosophy, since he had not attended college. He has spent summers working in the Diocese of Lafayette since entering the seminary and says that his former marriage has not been an issue. “I haven’t had any problems. So far, it’s been well received.”

Bordelon will be assigned to a parish in the Diocese of Lafayette after his ordination on June 28, though he doesn’t know which one yet.

“Wherever they put me, that’s where I’ll have to go,” he says.

The Roman Catholic annulment process is a very complicated one and often misunderstood by both members and non-members of the Church.

Sigur, an expert in Canon Law, says that it is technically improper to say that the Church “annuls” a marriage. In fact, Church officials examine the psychological, emotional and spiritual circumstances surrounding a marriage that has ended, and may find that it was “invalid from the start.” Then they declare the marriage “null.” In other words, a valid contract did not exist between the two parties and therefore the marriage never existed.

A Catholic seeking an annulment must present his case to a diocesan tribunal, which conducts an in-depth review of the marriage. “It is scrutinized very highly,” says Bordelon.

If the tribunal grants the request, it is then reviewed by a second panel in another diocese, which must uphold the annulment judgment in order for it to take effect.

Bordelon says second career vocations are increasing in the Church and are helping to fill the empty rectories caused by a drop-off in younger men entering the seminary.

Though Bordelon acknowledges that his marital experience may be an asset in helping him to counsel lay people (“I would say that it would give me an advantage, certainly.”), he has definite ideas on whether the Church should allow priests to marry.

He thinks it shouldn’t. He supports the celibacy rule for priests.

—RICHARD BAUDOUIN