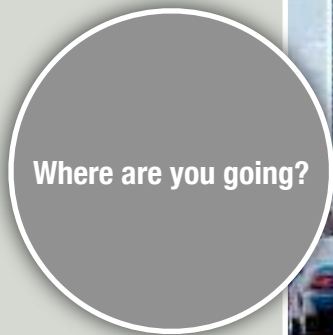


QUO VADIS

SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY



**“DO NOT SAY, ‘I AM ONLY A YOUTH’;
FOR TO ALL TO WHOM I SEND YOU YOU
SHALL GO, AND WHATEVER I
COMMAND YOU SHALL SPEAK.”**

Jeremiah 1:6

Divorce and Remarriage in the Catholic Church

By Peter Rowe

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Almost everyone who has studied morality knows, the Catholic Church condemns abortion, artificial contraception, and homosexual activity. But another of the one Church’s moral teachings is sometimes overlooked or even ignored, that is to divorce and to remarry while the spouse is still living is the mortal sin of adultery. This is not a recent innovation: it is based upon Christ Himself.

The strict teaching of the Church on the indissolubility of marriage is found in multiple paragraphs in the Catechism.

“Thus the marriage bond has been established by God himself in such a way that a marriage concluded and consummated between baptized persons can never be dissolved. This bond,

Pope Quote of the Month

Marriage is an act of will that signifies and involves a mutual gift, which unites the spouses and binds them to their eventual souls, with whom they make up a sole family - a domestic church.

John Paul II

which results from the free human act of the spouses and their consummation of the marriage, is a reality, henceforth irrevocable, and gives rise to a covenant guaranteed by God's fidelity. The Church does not have the power to contravene this disposition of divine wisdom." (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1640).

This teaching is countercultural. Our culture emphasizes rampant sexuality, sexuality with no consequences. Modern secularism has made sex a very casual matter. But the fact is, the consequences of widespread divorce are seen every day in society. Divorce is very destructive to all involved, especially children.

Scripture:

In the Sermon on the Mount, Our Lord is proclaimed by St. Matthew to be the New Moses, and even to surpass the teaching of Moses, the fulfillment of the promises to Moses. So for Him to change the Law,

we should pay very close attention.

"Our culture emphasizes rampant sexuality, sexuality with no consequences. Modern secularism has made sex a very casual matter."

"It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you, that

every one who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. (Matthew 5: 32-33)

"And the Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" He answered, "Have you not read that he

who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one? So they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined to together, let no man put asunder.'" They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?" He said to them, "For your hardness of heart Moses you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery; and he who marries a divorced woman, commits adultery." (Matthew 19: 3-9)

"And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery" (Mark 10: 11)

"Every one who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery." (Luke 16: 18)

Then the great St. Paul says, "To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband)- and that the husband should not divorce his wife. (1 Corinthians 7: 10-11)

It is important to note that the word St. Matthew uses is translated “unchastity” in the Revised Standard and New Revised Standard versions. Other, mainly Protestant, Bible translations use “fornication” or “adultery.” However, the New Jerusalem and New American Bible’s read, in the case of the New Jerusalem, “except in the case of an illicit marriage,” and the New American Bible, “unless the marriage is unlawful.” The Greek word refers then to marriages invalid because they were forbidden in Leviticus.

Hence, according to Scripture, marriage is permanent and divorce and remarriage are proscribed.

Early Church Fathers

The Scriptural evidence is solid, especially when properly understood what St. Matthew is speaking of when he uses the word “unchastity.” But Catholics do not go solely to the Good Book. We also reflect on the oral tradition, as Scripture itself teaches, (1 Corinth. 11: 2; 2 The. 2: 15; 3: 6.) So let us go to the Church Fathers.

The Shepherd of Hermas is a witness to the very early tradition of the Church. The Shepherd was written as early as mid-second century.

“I charge you, said he, to guard your chastity, and let no thought enter your heart of another man's wife, or of fornication, or of similar iniquities; for by doing this you commit a great sin. But if you always remember your own wife, you will never sin. For if this thought enter your heart, then you will sin; and if, in like manner, you think other wicked thoughts, you commit sin. For this thought is great sin in a servant of God. But if any one commit this wicked deed, he works death for himself. Attend, therefore, and refrain from this thought; for where purity dwells, there iniquity ought not to enter the heart of a righteous man. I said to him, Sir, permit me to ask you a few questions. Say on, said he. And I said to him, Sir, if any one has a wife who trusts in the Lord, and if he detect her in adultery, does the man sin if he continue to live with her? And he said to me, As long as he remains ignorant of her sin, the husband commits no transgression in living with

BOOK OF THE MONTH

Catholic for a Reason IV

Edited by Scott Hahn & Regis Flaherty.

Marriage and family life lived according to God’s plan can change lives and change the world! *Catholic for a Reason IV* explores the scriptural basis for the Catholic understanding of marriage. Join Scott and Kimberly Hahn, Mike Aquilina, and ten other well-known Catholic authors, who along with their spouses, present solid biblical testimony to the joys, struggles, and sanctity found in the sacrament of Marriage. Essays include “The World as Wedding,” “Lessons Learned at Nazareth,” and “Reflections on Pope Benedict XVI’s First Encyclical.”

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her. But if the husband know that his wife has gone astray, and if the woman does not repent, but persists in her fornication, and yet the husband continues to live with her, he also is guilty of her crime, and a sharer in her adultery. And I said to him, What then, sir, is the husband to do, if his wife continue in her vicious practices? And he said, The husband should put her away, and remain by himself. But if he put his wife away and marry another, he also commits adultery. And I said to him, What if the woman put away should repent, and wish to return to her husband: shall she not be taken back by her husband? And he said to me, Assuredly. If the husband do not take her back, he sins, and brings a great sin upon himself; for he ought to take back the sinner who has repented. But not frequently. For there is but one repentance to the servants of God. In case, therefore, that the divorced wife may repent, the husband ought not to marry another, when his wife has been put away. In this matter man and woman are to be treated exactly in the same way. Moreover, adultery is committed not only by those who pollute their flesh, but by those who imitate the heathen in their actions. Wherefore if any one persists in such deeds, and repents not, withdraw from him, and cease to live with him, otherwise you are a sharer in his sin. Therefore has the injunction been laid on you, that you should remain by yourselves, both man and woman, for in such persons repentance can take place.” – Commandments 4, 1, 4; Jurgens 86

The Council of Elvira declared, “Likewise a woman of the faith who has left an adulterous husband of the faith, and marries another: her so marrying is prohibited. If she has so married, she may not any more receive communion, - unless he that she has since departed from this world, - except if perchance the necessity of illness urge that it be given.” (Canon 10, Jurgens 611c.)

St. Basil the Great gives his advice, “The woman who has been abandoned by her husband, ought, in my judgment, to remain as she is. The Lord said, If any one leave his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, he causes her to commit adultery;

Matthew 5:22 thus, by calling her adulteress, He excludes her from intercourse with another man. For how can the man being guilty, as having caused adultery, and the woman, go without blame, when she is called adulteress by the Lord for having intercourse with another man?” (Letter 199, 48; Jurgens 922).

And one of the greatest of all the Fathers, St. Augustine writes,

“In marriage, however, let the blessings of marriage be loved: offspring, fidelity, and the sacramental bond. Offspring, not so much because it may be born, but because can be reborn; for it is born to punishment unless it be reborn to life. Fidelity, but such as even the unbelievers have among themselves, ardent as they are for the flesh... The sacramental bond, which they lose neither through separation nor through adultery, - this the spouses should guard chastely and harmoniously.” (Marriage and Concupiscence, 1, 17, 19; Jurgens 1869).

Church Fathers Quote

**Ignatius of Antioch [50-117 AD]
Letter to Polycarp, 5**

“Exhort my sisters to love the Lord and to please their husbands in flesh and spirit. Similarly, command my brother in the name of Jesus Christ to love their wives as Christ does the Church...It is fitting that men and women who marry seek unity with the will of the bishop that the marriage may be in accord with the Lord’s will and not by lust.” Ignatius of Antioch Letter to Polycarp, 5.

Quote taken from *Ignatius of Antioch: A New Translation and Theological Commentary* by Dr. Kenneth J. Howell

“If civil divorce remains the only possible way of ensuring certain legal rights, the care of the children, or the protection of inheritance, it can be tolerated and does not constitute a moral offense.”

The Teaching of the Catholic Church

In the teaching of the Church, while divorce and remarriage are illicit, there is an understanding that many couples have serious problems. For example, a woman and her children are not obligated to endure physical abuse. Separation is sometimes the best thing. Catechism Par. 2383 states:

“If civil divorce remains the only possible way of ensuring certain legal rights, the care of the children, or the protection of inheritance, it can be tolerated and does not constitute a moral offense.”

There are other aspects: a person who is unjustly divorced and has seriously tried to keep a marriage together is not guilty of the sin of adultery. However, Church

teaching condemns divorce normatively.

In modern times, many Catholics are disobedient to the Church and contract divorces and civil marriages. Those who do this are in mortal sin and may not receive communion (see Catechism 1650).

What about annulments?

The Catholic Church teaches that at times marriage was not properly entered into. The Church then declares a marriage did not occur. Annulments are absolutely not a “Catholic divorce.” If the Church fails to grant an annulment, then both parties are subject to Church law regarding remarriage.

Conclusion

Holy Matrimony is one of the Seven Sacraments and is a fundamental institution. Hence it should be treated as very sacred, especially Christian marriages. In our modern society, the callous abuse of marriage, the treating of it as trivial, are contrary to the standards Our Lord has set and the wisdom of the Catholic Church taught from the beginning.

Scripture Quote of the Month

The man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.
Genesis 2: 23-25

Marriage Q&A

By Mary Clare Pieczynski

What is the end of marriage?

The end of marriage is actually two-fold: the good of the spouses and the transmission of life. See Catechism of the Catholic Church 2362

Why does the Catholic Church not allow couples to contracept?

Because "it is necessary that each and every marriage act remain ordered per se to the procreation of human life. This particular doctrine...is based on the inseparable connection, established by God, which man on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act." Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2366

For a detailed explanation please see *Humanae Vitae*.

Catechism Quote of the Month

"The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament." Paragraph 1601

Can a Catholic marry a non-Catholic Christian?

Yes, with permission of the bishop. See Catechism of the Catholic Church 1635

Are you a teen or young adult on the journey into the Catholic Church?

Quo Vadis exists to provide fellowship and support to all youth who wish to draw closer to Jesus Christ and His One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, especially the youth of converting Protestant clergy or lay people.

For more information please contact Mary Clare Pieczynski maryp@chnetwork.org or 740-450-1175 ext 105

www.quovadis youth.org

Can a Catholic marry a non-Christian?

Yes, but the marriage is not sacramental.

What criteria must be met for a valid Catholic marriage?

(1) both spouses are free to marry (2) they both freely consent (3) they intend to be married for life and be faithful to each other and open to the transmission of life. (4) they give their consent before two witnesses and an authorized Church minister. Exception to this last criteria must be approved by a Church authority.

See www.usccb.org/laity/marriage/marriagefaqs.shtml